

# BLUEPRINT

VOL. 81 ISSUE 3 NOV. 2020



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## On the Cover

A talented group of Blueprint editorial staff came together to cover the daunting 2020 Presidential election. From Covid-19 to the founding fathers, Blueprint covers all aspects of the historical election. Turn to page 6 to read more!

Layout design by Anna Yiannikos | Cover design by Zoe Edelman | Cover photo by Anna Yiannikos



# Wicked Week: Students Safely Celebrate Halloween

*Despite the challenging times, Leadership provides students and teachers with a week devoted to Halloween fun.*

Sabrina Agazzi and Haley Rurka  
| Copy Editor and Staff Writer

As COVID-19 mandates took costume parties, scary movie nights, and trick or treating off the table, students looked for alternative ways to celebrate Halloween.

To maintain holiday excitement despite the circumstances, Leadership created the brand new Wicked Week, a time devoted to festive activities and bonding with peers, all while staying safe.

Wicked Week took place the last week of October and the first week of November after Leadership postponed it due to power outages in Lafayette. The week consisted of several different events, all aiming to spread joy and a sense of community in a time where social interactions are rare.

"I think [Wicked Week] is a nice way for students and staff to connect with the Acalanes community since everyone is so isolated from the school. Also, it's Halloween themed, so we based most of the activities and challenges on that," junior and Leadership ASB Secretary Franny Daughters said.

One of the main events was the Haunted Hallway Walkthrough, which took place on the evening of Friday, Oct. 30 at Acalanes. The Haunted Hallway gave students the opportunity to decorate a part of the halls by grade, play games, eat candy, and see friends in a safe manner.

"I really enjoyed the Haunted Hallway. I think that it was very well put together, and there were a lot of fun activities and games," sophomore Amelia Morgan said.

Leadership students decked out the hallways in cobwebs, ghosts, spiders, and more. As visitors made their way through these spooky halls, students in frightening costumes startled them by jumping out from behind walls.

"I thought it was over but when I walked past the library someone jumped out and scared me. It was surprisingly scary," sophomore Gabriela Benveniste said.



Blueprint Photo/Anna Yiannikos

To follow COVID-19 guidelines during Wicked Week, students were only allowed to come onto campus during Haunted Hallway, where they wore masks, social-distanced, and used hand sanitizer. Leadership took these rules seriously to maintain a safe environment.

"I felt very safe at the Haunted Hallway because everyone was wearing a mask and tried to stay far apart. Also, we provided hand sanitizer [at every station] and encouraged social distancing," freshman and Leadership student Olivia Williams said.

In a typical year, October centers around the annual Homecoming dance, football game, rallies, and other school spirit activities. Unfortunately, Leadership postponed Homecoming this year due to COVID-19. However, they took the opportunity to create a new event that could easily conform to safety guidelines and elevate school spirit.

"Nothing can replace Homecoming but I really believe in the power of connection when it is meshed with fun." Leadership teacher Katherine Walton said. "I think Wicked Week has both those elements. I also love some friendly competition."

Many students, teachers, and staff members who participated in Wicked Week felt Leadership's revised recreation of Homecoming Week was a success.

"[The Haunted Hallway] was a cool way to decorate the school and keep the tradition of Homecoming hallway decorating alive. It was

a little slice of normal." Counselor Susan Martin said.

Along with the Haunted Hallway, Leadership also invited students, parents, and teachers to attend a drive-in movie night on Thursday, Oct. 29, at the West Wind Solano Drive-In Theater in Concord where attendees viewed the movie *Monster House*.

"I had a great time at the movie and had a lot of fun with colleagues. [My favorite part was] going in costume and welcoming people in at the entrance," math teacher Harriet Kaizer said.

Another aspect of Wicked Week was the Goose Chase: a competition between cohort classes. Each morning of the week of Nov. 2 to 6, students had fun tasks to complete where students sent in videos of them doing different tasks to earn points for their cohort class. At the end of the week, history teacher Haley Walsh's cohort won with the most points. The students in the winning cohort class received personal pizzas.

To earn points for their cohort, one fun task students did was the Bean Boat Challenge.

"There's the Bean Boat activity where you can make your own boat out of a cereal box and they will put beans inside your boat. If your boat stays afloat, that can get you points for your cohort," sophomore and head of Leadership's Spirit Board Martha Burns said.

During Wicked Week, students also participated in two themed dress-up days. On Wednesday, Nov. 4 students dressed up according to the theme of

*Continued on 3*



# Lafayette Becomes Protest Hotspot

*Students take to the streets to voice their opinions here in Lafayette*

Julia Poole and Sabrina Agazzi |  
Online Feature Editor and Copy  
Editor

As the 2020 Presidential Election approached the finish line, students hoped their calls to action by protesting over the past few months effectively issued change.

Protests in the Lamorinda area increased in quantity over the past several weeks as a way of showing support for equal rights, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, and presidential candidates.

While protests and rallies sometimes occur in downtown Walnut Creek, recently, many have popped up in downtown Lafayette and on the El Curtola Overpass.

This increase in protests and rallies is largely due to the resurgence of the BLM movement and the divisive political polarization surrounding the presidential election. Internationally published photojournalist Trevor Henrich, who documents protests in the Lamorinda area, noticed an increase in the number of protests as the election neared.

"I think the election is driving a lot more protest activity. I think there is a huge increase in young people especially because there is so much to lose if Trump wins that young people that can't vote feel more passionate because they can't vote but still deserve to be heard," Henrich said.

Most Americans feel that every election matters, but many citizens believe this year's presidential election is vital to the future of our nation.

"I'm 58, so I've experienced a lot of elections. In my mind, this is the most important election of my lifetime. As a result, I'm not only on the bridge protesting, I've volunteered to make phone calls, and I've contributed more to this campaign than any other campaign I ever have," anti-Trump protestor and Lafayette citizen Steve Gersten said. "It's just so important to get this president out of office and get somebody in who's a true leader."

A large portion of these protestors are young people, particularly high schoolers. Many students are passionate about using their voice to demand change on the institutionalized racism in Lamorinda.



Blueprint Photo/Lue Van Handel

"I attended the BLM rally protests in Lafayette, Moraga, at the El Curtola Overpass, and at Acalanes. I went because there's clearly a problem of racism in Lamorinda, starting decades ago with redlining and stretching today with the police killing of Miles Hall, and there's an even greater worldwide problem of white supremacy. I wanted to make a difference by showing support and solidarity," junior Katrina Ortman said.

Similarly, some Acalanes students attended Trump rallies to instigate an open dialogue about controversial topics.

"I have gone to Trump rallies to educate and converse, express a message, and lead. Many Trump supporters are misinformed, I am proud to say that I have educated some Trump supporters that were willing to listen through peaceful discussion," senior Zevin Acuña said. "When I find Trump supporters at these rallies that are being threatening or racist, I make it known that they are not welcome and that they should leave."

While some dislike the increase of pro-Trump rallies in Lafayette, others feel it is important to have a fair representation of both parties.

"I think that it's great that people are enacting their first amendment rights, specifically freedom of assembly, which has been enshrined in the fabric of our nation since the 1770s... I think that the more Republicans in California the better because this state is swinging way too far to the left and the more of a Republican presence we have

in this state I think is positive," one anonymous Trump supporter said.

Amid the coronavirus pandemic, safety is of the utmost concern. Especially in group gatherings, masks prove vital to avoid contracting COVID-19. However, not all protest and rally attendees wear masks and social distance.

"I do have safety concerns because when I was counter-protesting [at a Trump rally] almost nobody was wearing a mask and when my friends and I asked them about it they didn't seem to care. Obviously, if I'm around people who aren't wearing masks I would be concerned about my health since we're in the middle of a pandemic," senior Sabrina Alesna said.

Many protestors face aggressive and sometimes violent responses from those on the opposing side. While documenting protests, Henrich was the victim of multiple violent altercations.

"I was afraid for my safety only after being pepper-sprayed by 40 Days for Life anti-abortion protester's armed security guards [on Oct. 13th]," Henrich said. "It was also pretty scary being tear-gassed by Walnut Creek police on June 1st while documenting the protest that made its way onto 680N."

Teens are no exception to the violent interactions between them and protestors with opposing views. Acuña witnessed multiple threatening encounters.

*Continued on 3*



# Gender-Neutral Bathroom Installations

*After three years of conversations surrounding gender-neutral bathrooms, administration moves forward with incorporating them into the campus.*

Brendan Connelly, Zach Snyder, and Nastia Grits | Staff Writers

The vast majority of people do not have to take the time to decide which bathroom to use. However, those who do not identify as cisgender face a much more difficult decision involving both their own gender-identity and societal expectations.

Before students return to campus, administration plans to install new gender-neutral bathrooms in hopes of creating a more thoughtful and inclusive school environment for all students.

Beginning in 2018, members of the Queer Straight Alliance (QSA) at Acalanes pushed for gender-neutral bathrooms on campus. Steph Liu and Helen Kleinsmith, both Acalanes graduates from the class of 2020, interviewed transgender students at Acalanes to understand their perspective.

Although the bathroom in the nurse's office is gender-neutral, it requires students to walk through the school office and it is often closed. After years of research and communication, the QSA advocated for a more accessible gender-neutral bathroom.

"The reason why we wanted to have a more accessible gender-neutral bathroom was that it would be a lot more convenient and comfortable for transgender and gender non-conforming folks," Liu said. "In my understanding, choosing which bathroom to use can be a source of distress and even dysphoria. Having a gender-neutral bathroom would make life a lot easier."

After the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) approved this project, students in the QSA were vigilant and kept up to date on its progress.

"Really the student part was advocating and then reminding. Once the district was on board, then it was just about the logistics. There were definitely some strategic decisions as to which restrooms to alter in terms of convenience and practicality," Associate Principal Mike Plant said.

These bathrooms are a major step towards



Blueprint Cartoon/Zoe Edelman

making the school environment more inclusive. There are some concerns, however, about how students may use or misuse these bathrooms.

"I just hope that people recognize the importance of a bathroom on campus for transgender students and respect that," Liu said.

Current QSA Presidents and juniors Emerson Brown and Autumn Long follow up with administration periodically to continue to ensure that the project is on schedule.

The final plan for the gender-neutral bathrooms includes a single stall bathroom in the 400 wing, and a multi-stall bathroom with greater privacy near the locker rooms. The purpose of this is to spread the bathrooms effectively across campus and give students a place to feel comfortable changing.

"Cisgender students have the privilege of not having to worry about which bathroom they use. Transgender kids deserve to not worry about it either," Liu said.

Sophomore Sophie Sawyer explained the impact these new bathrooms will have on her and other transgender students.

"Currently, using the boys' bathroom makes me feel dysphoric, and I refuse to use the girls' bathroom because I'll feel like a creep. So the gender-neutral bathroom would help me out a lot," Sawyer said.

The goal of these bathrooms is to make Acalanes an embracing and comfortable place for each and every student.

"I'm not sure how many people this will help, but even if it is only a few, it could very well change their overall school experience," Long said.

## Wicked Week

*Continued from 1*

Wacky Wednesday. On Friday, Nov. 6, they recreated a childhood outfit. By dressing up, students earned points for their cohort, aiming to get their group closer to first place.

Another activity of Wicked Week was the pumpkin carving contest. In this contest, Leadership provided pumpkins for students to carve. Participants entered their carved pumpkins in a contest to compete with the other submissions. After submission, all students voted for their favorite pumpkin and the winning student earned points for their cohort class.

While COVID-19 mostly prevents students from coming onto campus, Goose Chase is the perfect opportunity for students to get into the Halloween spirit while also safely connecting with the Acalanes community.

"I think anything that we can do right now to engage with one another, support one another, have fun, and remind ourselves that we are all part of the Acalanes community is really important. It is also a way to celebrate Halloween and bring that alive," Walton said.

## Protests

*Continued from*

"I have witnessed cars hitting people, swerving people and myself, and at a rally, I was not at, one of my friends was hit and was on the hood of a car for 40 seconds going about 30mph," Acuña said.

In most cases, however, protests remain respectful of the opposing viewpoints.

"I've never been scared for my safety at these protests. Everyone is always wearing a mask, and they're all outdoors. The media likes to portray protests, in general, as dangerous with looting or police violence, but the large majority of protests are completely peaceful," Ortman said.

Despite the confrontations and issues that sometimes arise with protests and rallies, most people recognize the importance of displaying their opinions in these challenging times.

"Everyone has a right to protest, I would be in the wrong if I were to say that I had the right to protest over Trump supporters just because I am supporting what I support. We are in a moment in time where protests are making headlines for various reasons, a pandemic will limit the ways we can act but they will not stop us all together," Acuña said.

# California Propositions Impact the Lives of High School Students

*Scoping in on arguments, opinions, and effects of Propositions 18, 16, and 15.*

Aysha Craig and Lyanne Wang | Copy Editor and Staff Writer

A hand hovers over a daunting column of check-boxes and names. A ballpoint pen marks the paper. With a slash, an individual completes their vote for or against 12 propositions.

California residents voted on various propositions in the General Election on Tuesday, Nov. 3, many of which directly affect high school students.

Of the 12 propositions on the ballot this year, Props 18, 16, and 15 would have promptly altered teenagers' political involvement along with impacting the education system and students within it.

## Proposition 18

Prop 18 permits 17-year-olds who will be 18 at the time of the next general election to vote in primaries and special elections. In effect, this would also allow eligible 17-year-olds to seek office, as they are registered voters.

"This proposition has the potential to increase political awareness amongst high schoolers," Acalanes Political Debate Club President and senior Ryan Bea said.

If passed, Prop 18 will expand voter participation by raising young voters' voices.

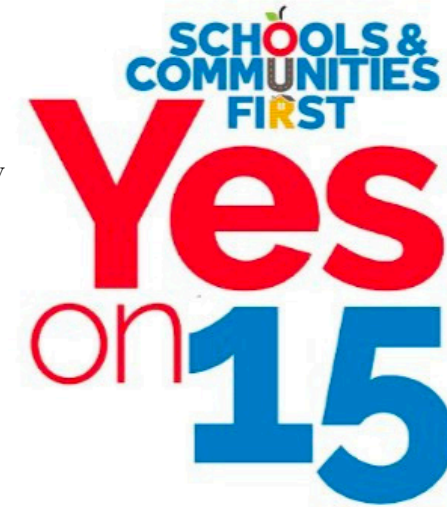
"If these students will be voters in the general election, it is only right to allow them to have a voice in the choices they will be making," AP Comparative Government teacher Joseph Schottland said. "This is particularly important in California where the top two vote-getters in the primary advance to the general."

Having first-time voters engage in an election cycle early-on may boost youth interest in politics.

"Allowing 17-year-olds to vote helps involve them in our democratic process, creating lifelong voters," Acalanes Political Debate Club member and sophomore Hanniel Dunn said.

Opponents of this proposition fear that 17-year-olds are not qualified voters due to their lack of real-world experience and developing brains.

"I think the passing of this proposition is un-



wise as high schoolers lack workplace experience that could influence their votes," Bea said.

Voting "Yes" on Prop 18 would cause an amendment to the California Constitution, ultimately increasing youth voting in primary elections. Voting "No" will continue to prohibit those below 18 years of age to vote from voting in primary elections.

However, Prop 18 failed to pass and only won 44 percent of the vote.

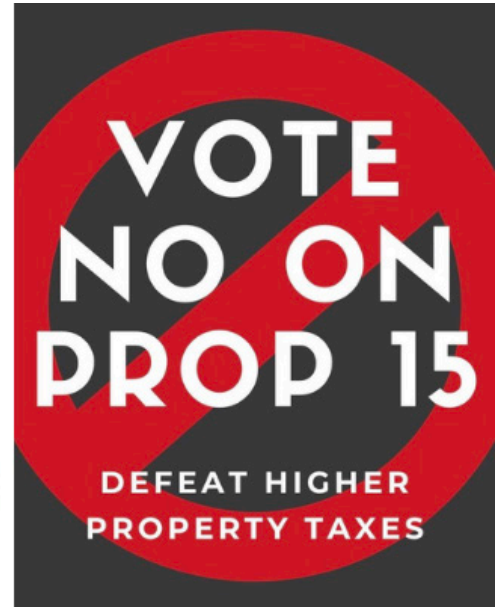
## Proposition 16

Prop 16 affects teenagers' opportunities in employment and education by stating that diversity is to act as a factor in public employment, education, and contracting decisions. It would have also repealed Prop 209 of 1996, which has prevented the government from discriminating or granting preferential treatment to persons based on race, sex, color, or ethnicity.

"Prop 16 attempts to provide greater equality in education through taking away the ban on racial discrimination or factors within the California Constitution," Dunn said.

This proposition worked to establish equity for all by granting opportunities to underrepresented groups. However, roughly 57 percent of California voters voted "No" on the proposition, striking it down.

"It is important to recognize that there is still bias and inequality when it comes to opportunities," senior Chloe Wu said, "This proposition can open doors to all people of color and allow for a more



Courtesy Graphic/EdSource

diverse, well-worked country."

Disagreement over Prop 16 revolves largely around California colleges' admission decisions. Restoring affirmative action would mean greater access to higher-level education for Black, Latino, and Native American students.

"There are many studies that show that a more diverse pool of applicants and students at UCs and Cal State schools is good for society, the economy and the student body. Race and gender will only be one of many factors to consider and not necessarily the determinative factor," Schottland said.

Despite this, advocates of Prop 16 warn that its passing will invariably lead to a decline in Asian and white-American admissions. Those against the proposition feel that allowing schools and public institutions to make decisions based on race is prejudicial.

"Racial reform is desperately needed in America, but getting rid of the California Constitution's commitment to equality before the law is a repudiation of the civil rights progress of yesteryear," Dunn said, "There are many other ways of social reform that maintain our commitment to treating everyone equally."

## Proposition 15

Teenagers may notice adjustments in educational institutions by way of Prop 15 which will repeal Prop 13 of 1978. Prop 15 intends on increasing funding sources for public schools and community colleges by requiring a tax on commercial and

*Continued on 5*



# Shrida's Systems: AUHSD Teaching System

## *How does the AUHSD teacher union, tenure, and protection work?*

Shrida Pandey | Online News Editor

As the nation faces an alarming teacher shortage, a prominent question arises in the community: how does the teaching system work at the Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD)?

The process of teacher hiring, tenure, and protection in the AUHSD continues to be a pressing and controversial issue in the Lamor-



Blueprint Cartoon/Anna Yiannikos

inda community.

The AUHSD hires new teachers at the end of every school year to account for teacher retirements and the amount of teachers needed for each school site's class distribution. After determining how many teaching positions they need to fill, the District recruits individuals through teacher conventions, job opening sites, and direct University recruitment.

Once a teacher expresses interest in employment, they submit a resume to the District and undergo an interview process. During this time, the District conducts a background check in accordance with state law.

"It is required that all teachers get fingerprinted upon entry to the District even if they have worked in another District. We are [also] required to do both an FBI background check

and a state clearance check," Associate Superintendent Amy McNamara said.

After candidates pass the background check, the District determines which prospective teachers they would like to employ.

"Usually, all of the candidates that we move through are [approved] by both the department chair and the principal together [as well as the District]," McNamara said.

Newly hired teachers are also placed on a two-year probationary period, which allows the District and administration to evaluate their professional performance. Prior to a teacher's third year, the District chooses between offering them a tenure or not renewing their contract.

"Tenureship is essentially [the school district] owes you a job unless there are huge extenuating circumstances or there are specific things that [a teacher] could get fired from," Acalanes Principal Travis Bell said.

Although controversial, many teachers believe tenure protects their rights.

"Tenure comes out of the power of being a part of the [the Acalanes Education Association]. As a member I do feel fortunate that I get a lot of protections, tenure being one of those things," Leadership teacher Katherine Walton said.

However, some students believe tenures allow for inconsistency and a lack of accountability for teachers.

"I feel like tenure allows for some teachers to slip through the cracks since I think the school can't do much to teachers if they don't meet the job expectations unless it is a grave offense," junior Sylvia Deng said.

When a teacher begins working at the AUHSD, they also join the certificated staff union, Acalanes Education Association (AEA), which helps protect teachers' rights and represents them at the District level.

"AEA negotiates salary, benefits, and working conditions for teachers and ensures that the collective bargaining agreement with the school district is enforced fairly and equitably," Acalanes teacher and AEA Lead Negotiator Michael Buchel said.

Many teachers appreciate the security AEA provides them, as employees can hold the District accountable when new changes occur, especially as the AUHSD moves to hybrid learning in the second semester.

"I think our Union has really done a good job working with the District to design a memoran-

dum of understanding that really lists out a lot about the conditions and things that are needed in a hybrid model," Walton said.

Despite the positive results of the AEA, some students question its efficacy in the District.

"I haven't heard about anything related to the AEA and the District. I wonder how they are actually impacting the school system and wish there was more transparency," senior Kylie Alfaro said.

Still, many community members point to the connection between teachers and the District as beneficial for the overall AUHSD education system.

"I would say for Acalanes [Education Association], it's the most collaborative relationship I have ever seen with the teachers union [and the District]....we are relying on that good relationship to help guide us, as we look to reopen schools," McNamara said.

## Propositions

*Continued from 4*

industrial properties based on their market value rather than their purchased price.

Although voters struck it down, Prop 15 would have increased property taxes on commercial properties worth more than \$3 million. This money would have then gone to other areas to benefit the public good including poverty, unemployment, unaffordable housing, homelessness, and underfunded schools.

Prop 15 raises the question of whether increased commercial property taxes are worth paying to fund schools and local governments.

"[Prop 15] is taxing more, but it is taxing companies that already have high revenues," Wu said, "Companies such as Amazon who have large funds would be taxed, and they would still do okay."

Proposition 15 specifically avoided increasing taxes on residential properties, purposefully targeting large corporations that own properties over \$3 million that do not pay their fair share of property taxes. Passing one of the largest property tax increases in California's history during a time of recession, however, may have brought negative effects to large landlords.

"Although our schools do need more money, California's property taxes and taxes, in general, are already high, and raising them will only exacerbate our housing shortage," Dunn said.



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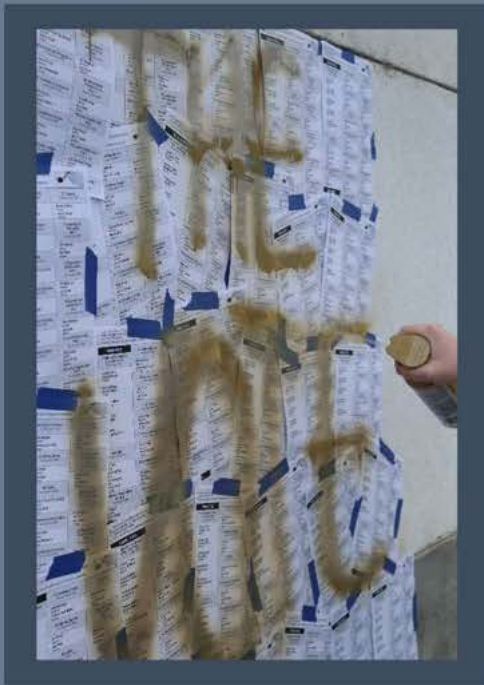


# THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

## FOUR DAYS AFTER ELECTION DAY, FORMER VICE PRESIDENT JOSEPH R. BIDEN WON THE PRESIDENCY

BY THE BLUEPRINT EDITORIAL STAFF

Four days after polls closed on election day, capping off the longest presidential campaign cycle in history, the major news networks declared former Vice President Joseph Biden of Scranton, Pa. the winner of the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election. President-elect Biden is the first candidate to defeat an incumbent president in 28 years and the first former Vice President to win the presidency since George H. W. Bush. On



Jan. 20, Biden and the Vice President-elect, Kamala Harris, will be sworn in as the 46th President and 49th Vice President of the United States.

Biden will be 78 years old as of his inauguration, making him the oldest person elected as President. Having served 36 years as a senator and 8 years as Vice-President to President Barack Obama, the presidency caps a long career in politics. Biden has suffered several tragedies, with his first wife and daughter passing away in a car crash in 1972 and his son Beau dying of a brain tumor in 2015. These experiences are said to be the source of his famed humility and empathy. The new First Lady, Jill Biden will notably continue her job as a teacher while in the White House and is a strong advocate for education.

Harris will be the first female and the second person of color to serve as Vice President. She is also the first Black woman and person of South Asian descent to serve on a major party ticket in American history. An Oakland native, Vice President-elect Harris will also be the first person from the Bay Area to serve as Vice President. Prior to becoming Vice President-elect, Harris was District Attorney in San Francisco, Attorney General for California, and most recently California's junior senator.

On his first day in office, the newly sworn-in President Donald J. Trump officially filed his reelection campaign with the Federal Election Commission (FEC). At the end of the longest and most expensive presidential campaign in history and after beating more than 20 challengers for the Democratic party nomination, Joe Biden defeated Trump in the electoral college by the same margin that the outgoing President won by in 2016.

For all Americans, the election not only determined our leader for the next four years, but it also served as a milestone in shaping the direction of our nation's future. Many Americans celebrated Biden's victory with rallies and celebrations that spontaneously broke out across the country. While Biden's victory announcement elated his supporters, some lamented that the lack of a landslide election did not provide them with the total moral repudiation of President Trump like many polls predicted.

"The 70 million votes for Trump were a little disappointing. I'm disappointed in my fellow white people for overwhelmingly voting for Trump. With all these woke movements in the atmosphere over the summer, I definitely feel that in school and around our community in California, but obviously that doesn't translate to the country as a whole," English teacher Erik Honda said.

While preliminary exit polling data from Edison Research showed Biden ahead with white voters in California, according to the Associated Press' polling of likely voters, white voters across the nation favored Trump by 12 percentage points.

Nevertheless, COVID-19 ensured that this would be a presidential election like no other. The Associated Press found that 41 percent of voters ranked the COVID-19 pandemic as the single most important issue facing the country while 28 percent ranked the economy or jobs as the most important issues, indicating that voters primarily sought out a candidate that could balance the handling of COVID-19 and the economy. Although polls indicated that the majority of people trusted Biden with controlling the pandemic, many supported the President's view that re-opening the economy should take precedence.

Many students saw a clear choice between the two candidates when it comes to handling the pandemic.

"[Depending on the outcome,] the country will either continue to let itself spike again and again by rushing reopening with no restrictions or it will promote the truth and spread awareness, encouraging masks, social distancing and healthy reopening," senior Miriya Huie said.

Throughout his campaign, President Trump often criticized Biden for wearing a mask and for his call for a nationwide mask mandate. In Iowa, two days before Election Day, the President said that "the Biden plan will turn America into a prison state, locking you down." However, on the campaign trail, the former Vice President has said that "there's going to be no need, in my view, to be able to shut down the whole economy," but has signaled that he would follow the advice of scientists.

Another significant issue that many students care about is cli-

mate change. Millions of young people demanded change through protests, and continue to advocate for better prevention of the global crisis through particular presidential candidates.

"I think that if Biden wins there will be clear strides to create new jobs in clean energy and help our nation work to combat climate change. I also think that having a president blatantly argue with scientific fact is despicable," senior Emilia Gutman said.

Many Americans are also concerned that the election results were a final straw in the nation's increasing polarization.

"I'm definitely worried about the country. Between our response to the pandemic, much-needed reform and the threat to our democracy as a whole, this election could either make or break the future of our country and the integrity of our system of government," Huie said.

Some, however, believe that the polarization of politics could have some unexpected benefits.

"I was just impressed with the level of discourse at Acalanes about the [2020 presidential election]. Just thinking back to 2016, I do feel like it was harder to have conversations. I feel like because we've lived in such a polarized environment for four years, people have had to get along with other people in their family and other people in their spaces that have the opposite point of view of them, and they have to figure out a way to navigate it," Honda said.

However, not all students agree that people are more open to listening to other opinions.

"I know tons of students that support Trump, but they only tell me because they know I feel the same way. Not very many people feel comfortable voicing their opinion anymore because it's so one-sided at school," one anonymous senior said. "My political beliefs aren't common in this area and I've received a lot of hate and pushback from it. I decided to stay anonymous because I see and hear how people talk about those that have the same political beliefs as me and I didn't want to be treated like that in my school."

Some students argue that the current political tide in America offers the opportunity for social reform.

"I think we should expect progress for our nation, based on the summer and spring, a lot of people have

## THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, the Founding Fathers established the Electoral College, a system that chooses electors from each state to vote for the President based on that state's congressional representatives. These delegates cast their vote based on their state's popular votes, except for Maine and Nebraska, which appoint their electors based on the popular vote in each congressional district in the case of Nebraska, or both the congressional district and the state in Maine. The candidate who wins at least 270 of the 538 total electoral votes wins the presidency.

In recent years, there has been growing opposition to the electoral college, with many Democrats calling for its abolition. This comes after two of the last six elections resulted in an Electoral College win for a candidate who did not receive the most votes. In the 2016 Presidential election, Hillary Clinton lost 304-227 in the electoral college to Donald Trump despite winning the popular vote by more than two million votes. In its attempt to represent the American people, many voters wonder if an election decided by the popular vote would be a better

approach.

According to a Pew Research Center study this year, 58 percent of adult Americans want to amend the Electoral College to a popular vote, while 40 percent prefer the current system.

A significant issue, per proponents of change, is that the Electoral College favors small rural, predominantly white states while reducing the influence of the large diverse urban centers that drive most of the GDP of the country.

"[The Electoral College] is extremely outdated and needs to be altered greatly or removed," Johnson said. "I think that the winner of the popular vote should be our president, instead of basing it off of how many electors are in one state."

With President Trump winning the 2016 election with a minority of the popular vote, this discussion has become more prescient. Some emphasize the importance of having every vote be equal in a democratic election.

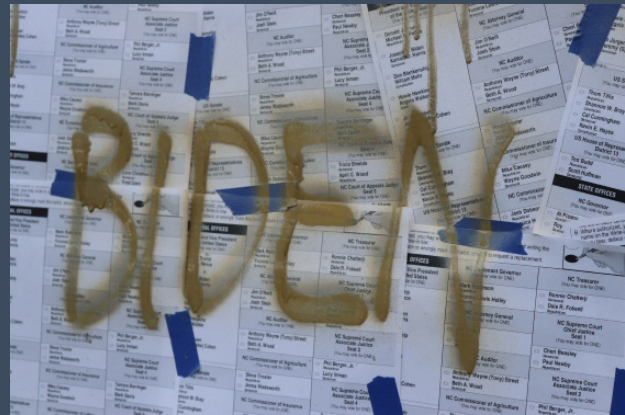
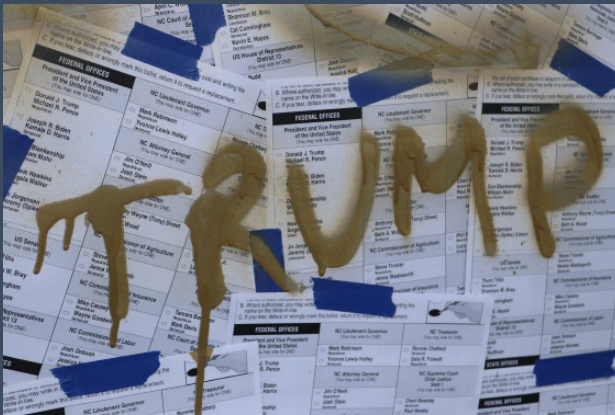
"Right now, it is unfair because someone's vote can count more than another person's. It could be fair if it was improved so that everyone's vote was equal," Toney said.

opened their eyes and ears to the truths behind police brutality and racial injustice; with this in mind, I expect this learning and growth to continue as well as be expanded to other areas like climate change and reproductive rights," senior Charlotte Fellner said.

In the shadow of the pandemic, the two campaigns could not have been any more different. In the early stages of President Trump's campaign, he focused on the strong economy, booming stock market, and healthy job market. With the arrival of the pandemic, he changed the focus of his







campaign to minimizing the pandemic, controlling COVID-19 through the development of a vaccine, rebuilding the COVID-ravaged economy through rapid re-opening, tax cuts, and calls for increased law enforcement (in response to the racial justice protests starting in late May).

Biden also focused on COVID-19, both criticizing the Trump administration's failure to curtail the spread of the disease and advocating heeding the advice of scientific and medical experts. He also campaigned on his focus on a continued fight against climate change starting with the US re-joining the Paris Climate Accord in contrast to the President's refusal to acknowledge that human activity has caused climate change.

Other key parts of the Biden platform were undoing many of Trump's tax cuts, expanding the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obama Care, and pushing for better ties with our historical allies and working with them to apply pressure to China with trade treaties.

The approach of the two candidates to campaigning within the COVID-19 pandemic also highlighted the differences between the worldviews of the two men. While Biden chose a careful approach to minimize the risk of spread, either appearing on camera from his home or holding drive-in rallies, Trump returned to traditional large scale rallies with few masks or social distancing, to highlight his message of opening the economy regardless of the risk of infection.

As in previous years, the 2020 presidential election hinged on just a few swing states. These are the handful

of states, which are the most likely to move between the parties and whose major counties, such as Maricopa in Arizona, Allegheny in Pennsylvania, or Gwinnett in Georgia, have become household names as the seemingly endless counts continued.

Based on election results in 2016 and 2018 as well as polling in the 2020 primaries, Politico expected the potential swing states for the 2020 election to include Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, North Carolina, Minnesota, Michigan, Georgia, Florida, and Arizona. While the list of swing states does not usually change significantly election to election, changing demographics can move a safe state to a swing state, as with Arizona this year. As a result of their perceived status as swing states, both campaigns focused on these areas, with most of the advertising expenditures and campaign rallies being held in these states. As a result, safe states, such as California, which have voted for the same party for several elections in a row, got very little attention from the candidates.

According to NPR, the combined advertising costs of the campaigns in the swing states were: Florida - 257.5 million, Pennsylvania - 195.7 million, Michigan - 120.1 million, North Carolina - 110.8 million, Wisconsin - 101.5 million, Arizona - 97.4 million, Georgia - 28.6 million, and 27.1 million in Minnesota. While still appealing to voters in other states, the candidates often focused their attention on these areas. This strategy has been proven to be successful again in 2020, with Joe Biden owing his electoral college win to wins of less than one percent in Georgia, Arizona, Pennsylvania, and less than two percent in Wisconsin.

In the past few years, the power of social media increasingly affected the outcomes of many elections, and this election was no exception. Both President Trump and Former Vice President Biden employed massive social media campaigns to gain support and attack their opponents. Unlike in 2016, when Russian operatives took advantage of social media's liberal policies to spread misinformation that may have affected the final results, the companies tried to limit foreign and inaccurate information in 2020. Twitter took the unprecedented step of flagging many of the President's post-election tweets as misleading, particularly when he launched inaccurate attacks against the legitimacy of the results.

Despite efforts to tag misleading posts, social media platforms cannot always promote complete honesty. Many believe that social media companies value profit over truth, and will accept ads regardless of their integrity. This is especially true for political ads that promise significant revenue.

## IMPORTANT DATES

Dec. 8 - Last Day to Resolve Court Challenges against Election Disputes

Dec. 14 - Electoral College Electors Cast their Votes

Dec. 23 - Vice President Must Receive the Final Vote Certificates

Jan. 6 - Congress will Count Electoral Votes

Jan. 20 - Inauguration Day

### STATE OFFICES

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(You may write for ONE)

Al Pisano

### NC Secretary of State

(You may write for ONE)

E.C. Sykes  
Reignolds  
Elaine Marshall

### NC Lieutenant Governor

(You may write for ONE)

Al Pisano  
Roy Cooper

### NC Treasurer

(You may write for ONE)

E.C. Sykes  
Reignolds  
Elaine Marshall

### NC Commissioner of Labor

(You may write for ONE)

Lora Christine Cubbage  
Fred Gore  
Kevin E. Hayes

### NC Commissioner of Agriculture

(You may write for ONE)

Thom Tillis  
Shannon W. Bray  
Cal Cunningham  
Kevin E. Hayes

### NC Commissioner of Health

(You may write for ONE)

Mike Cahill  
Wayne Goodwin

### NC Commissioner of Education

(You may write for ONE)

Mike Cahill  
Wayne Goodwin

"I think social media needs to be held more accountable on moderating misinformation, it's only recently that I've read about more initiatives to target disinformation on posts, etc.," Briggs said. "It is quite clear to me that social media platforms for a long time have been guided by profit over promoting truth."

As a direct result of COVID-19, many voters this year were initially hesitant when it came to voting in-person. In response, 13 states made voting easier this election by expanding eligibility for registered voters, while only three states decided against it. This meant that every voter in 40 states had access to mail-in ballots, while seven states including California mailed ballots to all registered voters. This increased access to mail-in and absentee voting contributed to the record 63.9 million ballots cast by-mail this election.

Along with mail-in voting, many people voted early for the first time due to many states allowing early voting or in-person absentee voting this election in order to reduce the risk of infection on election day. With 43 states offering early voting options this election, over 35 million people voted early in-person.

Overall, due to the easing of restrictions of mail-in/absentee voting, the opening of early voting, and the countless campaigns aiming to encourage more people to vote that happened during this election, roughly 64 percent of all eligible adults voted this election, the highest voter turnout has been since 1908.

In 2016, Donald Trump shocked the nation with his narrow victory over the former secretary of state and first lady, Hillary Clinton. However, in 2020,

Trump failed to repeat his victory over his Democratic challenger.

After falling behind in the early vote counts, Biden came back against President Trump in the key swing states, defeating the incumbent president and securing the presidency. Fueled by strong turnout through mail-in voting, Biden claimed victory in key swing states of Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, Georgia, and Arizona, all of which President Trump won in the 2016 election.

President-Elect Biden fell behind early because in-person voting slanted massively towards Republicans and most states counted these votes first. The vast majority of mail-in and absentee voting favored Democrats who had recommended using these forms of voting as being safer forms of voting during the pandemic.

This pattern continued in many states. Biden trailed in Pennsylvania by over 600,000 votes on Nov. 4 but eventually beat Trump by more than 60,000 votes. As many states started counting mail-in ballots later on election night, Trump's lead diminished in Michigan, winning the state by nearly 150,000 votes and edged out Trump in Wisconsin as well. The former Vice President also narrowly won Georgia, in a major upset.

Biden defeated Trump in the key swing states due to his strength in the major population centers of Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Atlanta but also in the growing suburban areas.

"I was surprised Biden did well in Pennsylvania and Michigan. I was surprised he got the lead in Georgia of all places," senior and Biden-voter Jon Van Hoy said.

In other places, Biden failed to deliv-

er. Although Biden was slightly favored to win in the sunbelt state of Florida, he ended up losing the state by roughly three points. While Clinton won the democratic stronghold of Miami-Dade County in Southeast Florida by nearly 30 points, Biden could not repeat the same dominance in the county winning by a mere seven points.

With two million Hispanics living in the state, Biden struggled to attract an essential demographic in hopes of flipping Florida blue. Cuban Americans, especially those in Miami-Dade County, became Biden's biggest obstacle to gaining Florida's 29 electoral votes as Republicans sought to paint Biden as a socialist in the image of Fidel Castro.

Overall, Trump totaled the most minority votes for a Republican in over sixty years. On the flip side, Trump's popularity among white men and women, especially those living in the suburbs, declined.

Regarding age demographics, with millions of people becoming politically active, voter turnout skyrocketed among voters aged 18-29, with this current generation arguably the most progressive in 80 years. A Tufts University study suggested youth voter turnout increased from 45 percent in 2016 to 53 percent in 2020. Additionally, the New York Times estimates that 62 percent of youth voters support President-elect Joe Biden compared to 35 percent supporting President Trump.

"I think it not only shows students the importance of voting and that everyone's vote matters, but also that one's vote isn't just on a national level but also on a state and local level, thus influencing policy





that may truly affect your life,” librarian Barbara Burkhalter said.

Most high school students are unable to voice their opinions through voting as few seniors are old enough to cast their ballot, however, there are many other ways for students too young to vote to express their political views.

With the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement sparking protests that spread throughout the country over the past six months, many young people, especially in the AUHSD community, became more politically active. And while the pandemic has increased the difficulty of holding public protests and rallies, social media has been a powerful tool for youth organizing.

According to the Pew Research Center, Generation Z makes up the most radical and ethnically diverse group with one in ten eligible voters. Millennials, ages 23 to 39, have voted democratically in the past four elections beginning with the Clinton/Bush era.

Ultimately, the increasing polarization of American politics in recent years dramatically influenced the views of all voters, especially younger voters.

“To me, there aren’t really viable pros and cons for both candidates. The race is clear cut. Biden, while not perfect, is still able to say that he will fight in a fair election and that he respects human rights, which is more than Trump has been able to do. I don’t have pros and cons as much as I have a viable choice and an absolute worst-case scenario,” senior Miriya Huie said.

Even with Joe Biden’s victory in the election, the power of the presidency does not immediately transfer to the President-elect. In the time between the election and the inauguration of Joe Biden commonly referred to as the transition or the lame-duck period, Trump still holds the reins of power. He still has the full powers of the Presidency at his disposal. Trump also continues to affect policies regarding issues such as COVID-19, currently raging out of control in all areas of the country. His decisions, including the nomination of Amy Coney Barrett to the Supreme Court, will continue to influence American politics for years to come.

The founding fathers decided on having a transition period between the election and the inauguration because of the difficulty of learning

everything the new administration needs to know across the breadth of the US government in addition to the challenge of having to select staff for the White House, the cabinet and the various departments. Regardless of how contentious elections have been in the past, the peaceful transfer of power has been a hallmark of American democracy and without that hand-off of the reins of power, the country is at risk while the nascent administration is finding its feet.

While the counting proceeded on the night of the election, President Trump gave a speech from the White House where he questioned the validity of the results in some of the key swing states due to concerns regarding mail-in voting and fraud in the counting and collection of votes. Since then, he has claimed wins in several states which he actually lost and complained about media outlets declaring President-elect Biden the winner, even though this was in keeping with previous elections, including in 2016 when Trump was victorious over Hillary Clinton in a tighter election than 2020. President Trump’s legal team has filed 16 lawsuits in states such as Pennsylvania, Arizona, Michigan, Georgia, Nevada, and Wisconsin and has lost in nearly all of them.

Despite the President’s claims of being cheated and of rampant fraud, most of these lawsuits have not alleged fraud, but issues with the process of allowing party representatives to view the counting or issues with a few individual ballots being completed correctly. While not all of these lawsuits have been ruled on yet, the courts have dismissed almost all of the lawsuits that have been heard for not having merit or for not concerning a sufficient number of votes to affect the outcome of the election.

“We voted by mail as a country in midterm elections, in the middle of the 1918 Pandemic and more than three US states conducted their elections exclusively by mail. Voting by mail is safe, effective, and reliable,” social studies teacher Joseph Schotland said.

At this point, It remains to be seen what the outcome of these challenges will be, whether the President will accept the results of the election and concede and commit to a peaceful transition, and in the long term, what the effect of his actions will have on

future elections.

In a country more polarized than ever, partisan gridlock has consistently prevented bipartisan negotiations, making it nearly impossible for progression in issues to be made. However, one of Biden’s central campaign themes has been a movement back to the politics of the 1980s and 1990s when compromise and bipartisanship were standard operating procedures.

Now President-elect, Biden must work on solving the issues that plague this country. Without a Democratic majority in the Senate, partisanship will likely prevent this new administration from making any significant changes without Republican support



However, as soon as Biden swears in as the 46th president, he will gain executive power, allowing him to undo many of Trump’s most controversial executive orders.

Biden’s first priorities will be to work on stifling the COVID-19 pandemic, passing a stimulus bill to revive the economy, and working on immigration issues such as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and reuniting families that the Department of Homeland Security separated at the Mexican border.

Throughout Biden’s campaign, he has continually emphasized the need for unity, saying that he wants to be a president for all Americans, not just those who voted for him.

“We have to choose hope over fear, unity over division, and truth over lies,” Biden said.

*All graphics and spreads by Zoe Edelman and Anna Yiannikos*

# Students Make a Difference Through Volunteer Opportunities

*How Acalanes students give back to the community during a pandemic*

August Walker, Sammy Lee, and Andrew Habas | Staff Writers

When the pandemic hit in the spring, many non-profit organizations lost their access to volunteers due to COVID-19 restrictions. Although the economy and businesses are reopening recently, requirements for social distancing continue to complicate many community service activities.

Many Acalanes students work extremely hard every year to volunteer and serve their communities, all while meeting the requirements for the Acalanes Volunteer Service Awards. However, with the pandemic posing new challenges, many students are struggling to accrue their volunteer hours with limited and safe volunteer opportunities.

Before COVID, Acalanes offered many volunteer opportunities to students. For instance, students used to help with Bingo Night in Moraga, which is no longer an option this school year. Students also volunteered for after-school tutoring programs and events like the Hot Chocolate Run for the Make-a-Wish Foundation or the Swim-a-Mile for Cancer Research. However, these programs have canceled all in-person events for the safety of the participants.

Diane Archer, the Acalanes Volunteer Service Award Coordinator, recognized the challenges students are facing in regards to volunteering.

"Last year we had a minimum of 30 hours to qualify for the Volunteer Service Awards. In March, when COVID hit, we realized that students were impacted and wouldn't necessarily be able to fulfill their obligations because opportunities were drying up and being canceled because so much of the volunteer work was face to face. So we reduced the minimum to 20 hours," Archer said.

Archer also explains how she will be more flexible this year when considering what activities will be approved as community service hours. For instance, many students are helping at-risk people, like the elderly, get their groceries. Last year, Archer would not consider this as an act of service, but the Service Award group's new flexibility rules allows students to submit service hours like this.

Archer's Service Award group may have re-adjusted their requirements, but the President's



Blueprint Graphic/Lue Van Handel

Service Awards, a federal volunteering program, has not changed their hour requirement amid the pandemic. As a result, Archer thinks that it may be more challenging to qualify for the Presidential Awards this year, which requires a minimum of 50 volunteer hours to receive the award if a student is younger than 16 years old, and a minimum of 100 volunteer hours if a student is older than 16.

"[Presidential Service Award programs] have done nothing to change their system, or reduce their minimum hours to qualify, and so it would be very difficult for a student this year to qualify," Archer said.

Despite the challenges posed by the shelter in place, student have found many volunteer opportunities in response to the pandemic.

"We do know that some of the community organizations like the Monument Crisis Center (MCC), as well as food banks, are allowing some of their in-person activities to begin again."

These organizations are in desperate need of volunteers. Many people have lost their jobs due to COVID and require the services of MCC and the food bank. Many elders need such volunteer services because they are at-risk.

Acalanes students have many opportunities

to give back to the community. Acalanes Key Club has been a popular and easy way to make a difference directly through Acalanes. To work around the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, students volunteer through Key Club but work independently.

"For Key Club, we do mostly distanced events this year. We've made toys for animal shelters so far this year. So what we do is we pick up materials from school, we go home and make them, and then we drop them off," sophomore and Key Club member Luca Mathias said.

The experience of Key Club was much more interactive and involved with the community before COVID-19. Last year, Key Club helped organize several events to support various charities.

"We helped with a lot of school events, games, and organized food stalls to go to different charities and other organizations. There was a lot of volunteer work, there was even a haunted house where we got to hide and scare kids with disabilities. Which sounds bad when I say it, but it was fun," sophomore Olivia Banks said.

Another opportunity for Acalanes students to safely volunteer is the Stege Pen Pal program. Acalanes has partnered with Stege, its sister school, for several years. The Pen Pal Program helps younger students at Stege practice their reading and writing skills while connecting the schools.

Even if the pandemic makes it difficult to find safe, socially-distanced opportunities to serve the community, many people think helping the community is still worth it. There are new opportunities both in and outside of Acalanes that let volunteers serve for worthy causes. Both big projects like organizing a food drive and smaller efforts like making sandwiches are worth the time and effort.

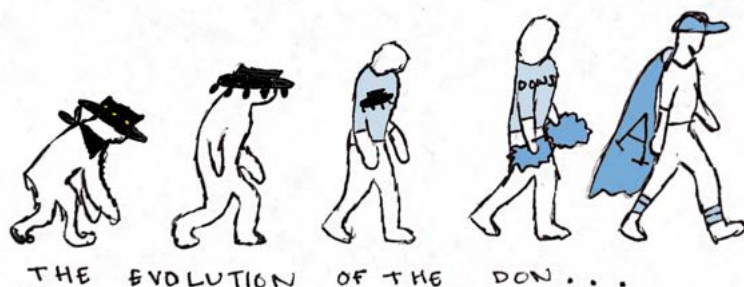
"I think volunteering is really good for us all to engage in and so even if it's just cleaning the gutters and taking in trash cans for a neighbor, there are ways to engage. It's really good for the soul, and it's also good for your own mental health," Leadership teacher Katherine Walton said.



# Dons Community Questions Controversial Mascot

*Acalanes questions if a change in mascot is necessary for the ideal inclusive school environment*

Aaron Vaserman and Daniel Adri | Staff Writers



Blueprint Cartoon / Anna  
Yiannikos

Sports teams all over the world have proud supporters that root for their favorite teams. From merchandise and clothing to watching games routinely, proud fans associate each team with their mascots. Recently, though, many concerned viewers have called for changes in some mascots, as they find negative and politically offensive connotations behind them.

Society is recognizing many more social issues that have been previously ignored. Worldwide, team mascots have face backlash for being politically insensitive and controversial, and organizations receive pressure to change them constantly.

In light of arising social movements like Black Lives Matter, various historical statues and monuments face reconsideration and possible removal to accommodate the complaints that such statues are demeaning to groups of individuals based on race, religion, or gender.

With people listening to and uplifting BIPOC voices amid the many social issues in the United States, the issue of mascots and the controversial racial connotations across America is pressing. From our very own Acalanes Dons to the ex-Washington Redskins (now “Washington Football Team”), countless mascots are facing examinations.

The Washington Football Team, (previously the Redskins), changed their name due to pressure from the Native American community. Before the change, Nike removed all of

the team’s apparel from its stores, urging the Washington team to change its mascot. Along with Nike, fellow corporations boycotted the Redskins logo. However, junior Katherine Montoya shares a different insight regarding the removal of the former mascot.

“Personally, the mascot did not bother me. The removal of the mascot actually made me sad because my culture was represented by a professional football team and now it is not,” Montoya said.

The Acalanes community also has a decision to make regarding its mascot, the Don. The Don represents a well-respected Spanish gentleman who is usually a self-made, successful landowner. Vice Principal Mike Plant weighed in on the history of the Don and its background to the school.

“My understanding is that the land was granted to the Dons, and was done so without a fair provision for the Indigenous peoples of that time. One perspective is that the land was stolen and the Indigenous people became de facto slaves,” Plant said.

Those who see the mascot as fit for change want the new mascot to represent the respected values that we cherish at Acalanes, something to be proud of. The Dons mascot has a long, important history, and isn’t a decision to be made lightly.

Those who aren’t affected culturally by the mascot remain indifferent.

“I have heard about Acalanes wanting to change their mascot. Personally, it does not

bother me,” Montoya said.

Rebranding a mascot is often costly. According to Plant, however, fully rebranding the Acalanes mascot is not a financial issue.

“Most stuff would be easy to transition over, once/if we pick a new mascot and nickname. The wall murals and certain other things would be tricky but my understanding is that the cost itself is not prohibitive,” Plant said.

Considering the history of the Don, if many students are offended by the mascot, the school would consider the change.

“If the Dons’ has a negative meaning for some, then we need to examine whether we want to continue with the Dons as our mascot,” Plant said.

Some students see the Don as a source of school pride and something that brings together our community. Junior Levi Rudin thinks that the Don plays an important role in school athletics, in that it unites many students.

“As a student-athlete, I believe that the energy and spirit the Don brings to sporting events is irreplaceable. Also, our school mascot strikes passion in our students and brings out the enthusiasm to help us in games, especially the playoffs,” Rudin said.

The Acalanes community wants everyone to feel welcome and create a safe environment for its members.

“As a leader, I do not want to ignore something that is causing harm to anyone,” Plant said.

# Students Work Towards Ethical Consumerism

*The newfound importance of brand choice and principled shopping practices*

Jacque Peacock and Juliana Upp | Staff Writers

The typical shopper loves to find great deals and sales at their favorite stores. However, people often overlook the background of these products. Finding a good deal when shopping is gratifying for many, but a low price doesn't always equate to an ethically made product.

Many Acalanes students encourage ethical consumerism by reevaluating where they shop and the effects of their purchases.

Ethical consumerism is the practice of buying sustainable products made with virtue. Shopping ethically includes avoiding fast fashion and one-use plastics.

Our capitalistic society has normalized unethical consumerism because it's difficult to navigate shopping morally when most companies make products cheaply.

"If we are going to talk honestly about ethical consumerism, what that means is not consuming whenever possible" AP Environmental Sciences teacher Jada Paniagua said.

However, brands that make products poorly have recently gained traction on social media for their low prices. These include companies like Shein and Aliexpress, both of which TikTok users popularize as a trend to show off large hauls.

"People would buy a ton of clothes from there and show them off on social media. It became a popular trend and people were amazed at how little it cost," sophomore Charlotte McKenzie said.

However, cheap retail prices often lead to repercussions around the world.

"It's so cheap because people aren't being paid livable wages in other parts of the world, or they don't have health insurance, or there aren't safe working conditions," Paniagua said. "The resources are harvested in the cheapest way, which is also usually the least sustainable way."

Nonetheless, teens on social media recently shone a new light on unethical practices like these. Many people try to educate themselves on the poor working conditions and

environmental effects, and many believe that the cons outweigh the pros of such consumerism.

"Now on social media, when people post their 'Shein hauls', a lot of comments are hating on them for supporting a corrupt company," freshman Emily Jones said.

Since this widespread revelation, teenagers began to think critically about where they shop. As a result, shoppers frequently shop at online and in-person secondhand stores.

"I usually shop on Depop and small online boutiques and shops. I also go to vintage shops and thrift stores, but I often like those other options more because it's easier to find what you need," Climate Alliance club President Amelia Morgan said.

Apps like Depop and Poshmark offer a secondhand shopping experience that many teenagers adopted when purchasing items sustainably.

"I like that I can find almost anything there. However, a lot of the stuff is overpriced and people mark it up a lot to resell it," McKenzie said.

Many sellers buy from thrift stores and resell the clothing on secondhand shopping apps, and others see this money-making strategy as morally wrong.

"If you're going into the children's section to look for 3 dollar 'crop tops' to resell on

Depop for 30 dollars, take a step back," Morgan said. "I think that thrift stores can be a good option for shopping second hand. But, now that thrifting has become sort of a trend, it is making the clothes less accessible to those in need."

Others disagree with this concern because donations tend to overwhelm thrift stores.

"There is so much [donated], and most of the clothing that's donated is thrown away because there's not enough demand," Paniagua said.

Clothing is not the only product widely thrown away. People across the world discard one-use plastics daily. Much like Shein and Aliexpress trends, disposable cameras have taken social media by storm, becoming widely popular for the vintage look. Many young adults find these cameras inexpensive and fun to use, but unfortunately, they are extremely wasteful.

"I like the simplicity of capturing the moment quickly on a disposable camera. It's almost effortless and more fun than using a digital device," junior Kirra Allio said.

However, Allio changed her photography habits to lessen her environmental impact. She started using reloadable film cameras to take photos instead of purchasing disposable cameras.

"[Film cameras are] just a little more



Blueprint Cartoon / Mara Korzeniowska



## Feature

expensive than a singular disposable camera and you don't have to produce as much waste every time. I decided to do this because I try to avoid single-use items, as they are not good for the environment," Allio said.

These short-lived products have drastic negative impacts on the environment.

"When we create these goods, we create huge amounts of air and water pollution usually in other parts of the world. This is because not only is the labor cheap, but the environmental regulations are much weaker," Paniagua said.

Every time someone purchases from an unsustainable brand or uses a non-recyclable piece of plastic, they contribute to this monstrous global issue.

"If you consume less, your environmental impact will go down," said Morgan.

If people stop buying products from unethical brands, they will help slow down the enormous amounts of waste that come with these products. Buying less means slowing the immense effects of consumerism.

"Our planet is limited. What we have on our planet is never going to be more than it is right now," Paniagua said. "We can't just take things and then throw them away and be done with them. What we're going to do is run out of stuff to make things and overfill our planet with garbage."



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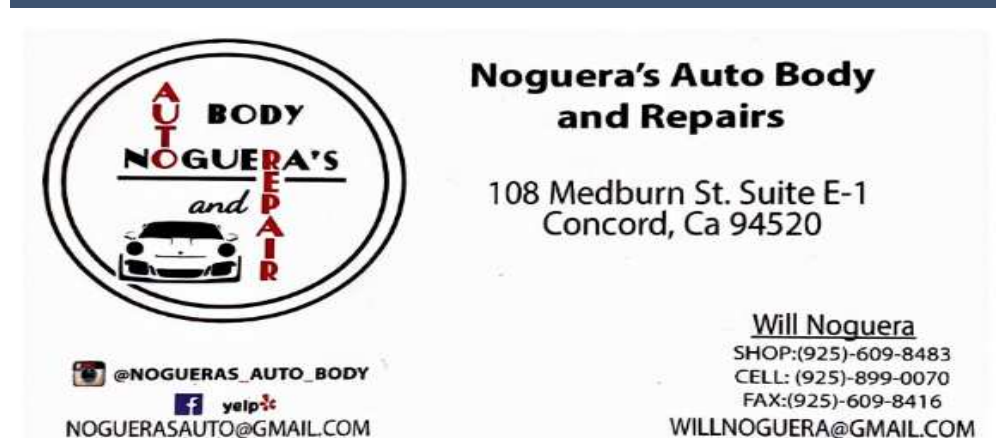


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# Digitalization: The End of Legendary Artists

## *How the internet & social media ended an era of romanticized music artists*

Alex Ariker | Copy Editor

We live in an age defined by easy access to information, enabled by indefinite exposure to the internet. Consequently, most Acalanes students will never have a chance to live like the teenagers of old and 'worship' super-celebrity musical artists.

The internet is not only responsible for revolutionizing the way we live and communicate but also for ending an era of extremely popular and romanticized musical artists which we will likely never see again.

Artists that fall under this umbrella became popular from the 60s to the late 90s and range a wide variety of genres. The most prominent artists to reach this 'legendary status' include the Beatles, Michael Jackson, and Madonna.

All of the mentioned artists rose to fame through talented acts that revolutionized their time period. Whether it was the Beatles' mix of rock and roll with world and orchestral music, or Michael Jackson's iconic dance moves like the 'moonwalk,' they awed their fans and built extraordinary followings.

Tracey Pedroni, spouse of an Acalanes Alumna, idolized Madonna during her prime interest in pop culture.

"[Madonna] had a whole lifestyle about her that no one had done before, so at the time it was very shocking and very intriguing, so that's why I was really into her," Pedroni said.

Another display of these exuberant masses of fans occurred at concerts. For instance, people even allege that several fans fainted after watching Michael Jackson perform close up at a live show.

One of the major reasons the era of legendary and idealized artists ended is due to the lack of exclusivity surrounding modern musical artists.

In the past, fans waited long periods of time before getting the chance to see their favorite artists. People anticipated the moment they could watch their idols in concert, or on the off-chance, they received a television interview. This limited publicity contributed to the thrill among fans.

"It was almost like a frenzy; people would get so obsessed and into it because you didn't have the same level of access," Pedroni said.

Exclusiveness also created a mystified 'shroud' around celebrities, elevating them to a higher level of life than the rest of society.

However, the creation of the internet and services like social media destroyed that shroud of secrecy, giving fans constant access to news about their favorite musicians and celebrities.

Social media had a large impact on demystifying and personalizing artists. The platforms give fans an opportunity to peer into the regular lives of artists, lowering their dramatic



Blueprint Photo / Freschttta Warres

and revered lives to the level of regular fans.

"I think [social media] definitely makes artists less exclusive by giving fans an opportunity to see into their life," junior Aidan O'Brien said.

This reduced exclusiveness results in a decrease of overall eagerness and passion in fans.

Although the possibility of other artists reaching extreme popularity and fandom remains plausible, it is unlikely due to the advancements of social media and the internet.



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# Amazon's "The Boys": The Next Superhero Phenomenon

*How a small superhero satire quickly built a large following*

Keith Johnson | Head Videographer

The evident prosperity of franchises such as the Marvel Cinematic Universe influences the commonality of Hollywood's average superhero story. Featuring less heroic protagonists, movies like "Deadpool" even started to feel overdone.

Despite archetypical oversaturation, Amazon Prime hit gold on the silver screen with their show "The Boys." The series flips the superhero genre on its head, turning seemingly perfect heroes into corrupt celebrities.

The show centers around two main teams: the Seven, an Avengers-esque group of likable and charismatic "supes," and the Boys, a secret team of regular people who desperately want to take down the Seven and their evil parent company Vought Industries.

Despite heroic outward appearances, many members of the Seven are secretly corrupt, apathetic, and power-hungry. This flips the classic superhero story around, as the Seven remain extremely well-liked by the public.

The main antihero protagonists display different realistic perspectives of a superhero world.

Hughie, a shy, mild-mannered, electronics worker, seeks vengeance on Vought after a superhero accidentally kills his

girlfriend. Teaming up with the serious Billy Butcher, the leader of the Boys, they vow to destroy Vought and the Seven.

Butcher deals with the disappearance of his wife Becca, who went missing shortly after meeting the egotistical and narcissistic leader of the Seven, Homelander. Meanwhile, Hughie falls in love with the newest member of the Seven, Annie.

Annie, also known as Starlight,

serves as the third protagonist of the series and gives the viewer a chance to see the corruption of the Seven through the eyes of an innocent and purely good superhero.

All three protagonists come face to face with Homelander, who at first seems like an evil Superman. However, Homelander's character becomes more complex and less cliché as the series continues.

When season one premiered in 2019, "The Boys" was fairly unknown. Despite the lack of popularity, the season featured amazing characters and writing. With the first season an obvious hit, the show's second season aired on Sept. 4, 2020.

In preparation for season two, Amazon funded a large ad campaign, introducing more people to the series. After its release, the show gained many new fans through the various ads and sponsorships. Amazon Prime sponsored YouTubers and Twitch streamers to increase their fan base, notifying many teens and young adults of the show.

Luckily, season two managed to meet the excellence of the previous season, increasing the tension between the two sides and furthering Homelander's character development and backstory.

However, the season suffered from many filler storylines and slow episodes that greatly differed from the fast-paced narrative of the first season. The middle episodes drag on while hinting at something greater that only arrives during the finale.

Unlike the slow narrative included in parts of the season, the final episode is incredibly intense, featuring many fight scenes and moments that reference and resolve previous jokes and plot holes.

Ahead of the premiere of season two, Amazon renewed "The Boys" for yet another season. Hopefully, fans will see more of their favorite characters next fall, as well as several new characters teased by the show's creators.



Courtesy Photo / Amazon Prime Video

# Recipe of the Issue: Fall German Apple Cake

*Head into fall with this delicious seasonal treat*

Blueprint Photo / Sabrina Agazzi

Sabrina Agazzi | Copy Editor

## **Cake Ingredients:**

½ cup vegetable oil  
 1 individual size apple sauce (½ cup)  
 2 eggs  
 1 cup white sugar  
 ½ cup packed brown sugar  
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 2 cups all purpose flour  
 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon  
 ½ teaspoon baking soda  
 ¼ teaspoon salt  
 4 cups peeled and cored apples sliced thin (crisp, tart apples are best)

## **Directions:**

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Apply non-stick spray to a 9x13 inch cake pan.

Place the oil, apple sauce, and eggs into a medium mixing bowl and blend using an electric mixer for approximately three minutes until smooth.

Add sugar and vanilla and blend thoroughly.

In a separate bowl, combine the flour, salt, baking soda and cinnamon then gradually add this mixture to the batter.

Fold in the sliced apples so all the apple pieces are coated with batter and place the mixture into the cake pan.

Bake for approximately 35 to 45 minutes. Test the center with a knife. The knife should come out clean when done.

After cooling, the cake can be frosted with cream cheese frosting or topped with a caramel glaze.

## **Caramel Glaze Ingredients:**

½ cup butter  
 ½ cup brown sugar  
 ¼ cup heavy cream or half and half  
 ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

## **Directions:**

Add all ingredients to a sauce pan and bring to a boil. Boil for three minutes stirring constantly. Remove from the heat and add the vanilla extract. Let caramel cool for three minutes, drizzle over warm cake.

Enjoy!





# Quote of the Issue: Oscar Wilde



*“The basis of optimism is sheer terror” - Oscar Wilde*

Kayli Harley | Online Editor-in-Chief

The world is aflame. A virus straps us to isolation, the environment weeps for our mercy, the health of our nation rests in the outcome of the election, and our futures lie hidden in fog. It is difficult to maintain anything but a resilient pessimism and a myopic positivity.

Everywhere we turn, the world breaks in a new place. A plethora of problems vie for our attention, and each of them deserves it. We cannot seem to come together to resolve anything, which only intensifies the chaos. It's a tiring cycle of uncertainty and panic, but within this cycle, we can create hope.

We loathe uncertainty. It is a harrowing voice in the back of our minds that taunts us with its speculations. It instills fears in us that keep us up at night and steals our thoughts during the day. We detest it, and when we detest something we are inclined to change it.

I look at the world around me and I see people ready to make a difference because the life we are creating petrifies them. I see people fighting for equality in the face of adversity. I see silenced women demanding their voices be heard. I see my generation making its presence known among those who call us immature and inexperienced. So, although the problems of the world can stretch our patience and optimism until they are poised to snap, they can also awaken resilience.

A persistent voice sounds within each of us right now, and whether it is a whisper or a thundering cry, it calls us towards something; make it something good. This voice is our resistance to defeat and our will that sprouts from fear. Listen to it.



# Ella's Playlist: Finding Quality Tunes for All

*Exploring your new music favorites, with me! Ella!*

Ella Alpert | Arts Editor and Liaison Editor

Whether you routinely memorize the wordy numbers of popular Broadway soundtracks or bump to the experimental sounds of smooth jazz, I believe everyone has the capacity to enjoy any music genre.

No matter your natural or developed preference to a specific category, music can always surprise those who are open to exploration. Of course, it's not expected that you will like everything; what matters is your willingness to give different genres a chance, even if it's not your usual 'jam.'

In light of this, I wanted to share a playlist that stores an abundance of killer tunes to get you out of your comfort zone.

I tailored my selection to contain a little of everything, so if you wish to sample something new, take a chance! The worst a song can do is take three minutes of your time.

And if you end up thinking the playlist is trash, no hard feelings; music is all subjective. I'm happy you even gave it a shot.

These are just a few of the songs on the playlist, so if you enjoy please feel free to follow my Spotify account @ellabellify. The playlist is titled "blueprint" and it is open for exploration!

With that off my chest, happy listening! I hope you all find a new banger somewhere in here.



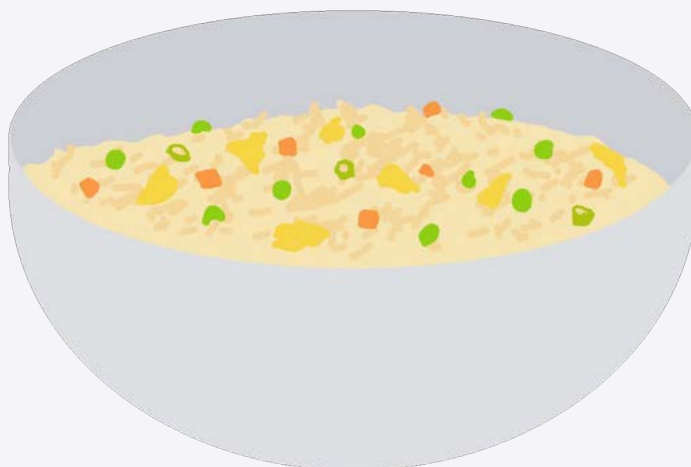
Blueprint Photo / Ella Alpert

	God Only Knows - Remastered The Beach Boys	♥	...
	All Falls Down Kanye West, Syleena Johnson		...
	All For Us - from the HBO Original Series... Labrinth, Zendaya		...
	Best I Ever Had Drake		...
	BEST INTEREST Tyler, The Creator		...
	Sarah Alex G		...
	Between the Bars Elliott Smith		...
	Say Yes Elliott Smith		...
	You Make Me Feel Like Dancing ~... Leo Sayer	♥	...
	So Good At Being in Trouble Unknown Mortal Orchestra		...
	ARE WE STILL FRIENDS? Tyler, The Creator		...
	Johnny Was Bob Marley & The Wailers		...
	Running Wide Open Coma Cinema		...
	Smaller Christian Leave		...
	Heart Mind Kodak Black, Ploes		...
	142 Inner Wave		...
	My Eyes Adored You Frankie Valli		...
	I Found a Reason - 2015 Remaster The Velvet Underground		...
	You Know I'm No Good Amy Winehouse	♥	...
	Bye Bye Baby Bay City Rollers		...
	Naked Bickle		...
	Eleanor Rigby - Remastered 2009 The Beatles		...
	How Deep Is Your Love Bee Gees		...
	Bye Bye Love The Cars		...
	Sharpen Up Those Fangs The Presidents Of The United States Of...	♥	...
	Campus Vampire Weekend		...





# The Art of Fried Rice



Blueprint Photo / Seth Kline

*Unfortunately, many people still are not cooking it right. This hurts my feelings.*

Lizzy Xie | Managing Editor

Hi, hello! Welcome back to Snacks with Xie (Shey. Get it right, please. This pronunciation has already been simplified for your convenience. You're welcome.)

If you are like me, you may have been either eating and cooking up a feast, or watching a lot of YouTube. I've been doing both.

My most recent YouTube discovery is the wonderful presence of Uncle Roger, alternatively known as Malaysian comedian Nigel Ng.

Most recently, Uncle Roger became more popular due to his review of BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) chef Hersha Patel's take on fried rice.

You may have seen the video floating around -- Chef Patel sends Uncle Roger into a rage after she strains half cooked rice through a colander.

So... fried rice. Let's talk about it. Uncle Roger is quite critical of it. He roasts many chefs, including, as previously mentioned, Hersha Patel, and Jamie Oliver.

Fried rice is a staple food of my childhood and my current life. When I was little, my mom or grandma would make me fried rice when it was cold outside. The steaming bowl of deliciousness warmed me up and put me in a good mood for the rest of the week. Today, fried rice is something that I can always make if there's nothing to eat. The ingredients are always available in my house.

But what makes a good fried rice?

This is an age old question that really does not have a singular correct answer. This is something I would like to clarify before we get into anything else. This being said, just because there isn't a correct answer, there are indeed incorrect answers.

Before I get into anything else, I think we should go over the history of fried rice. Fried

rice originated from China during the Sui Dynasty (581 AD-618 AD. That's a long time ago.) It came to the United States in the 1900s where it slowly became popularized when Chinese laborers cooked this dish for people.

Everyone has their own way of making it, but there are a few things that cannot change. For one, fried rice must be made with leftover rice that's been refrigerated for at least a day. Leftover rice is more stale and dry compared to freshly cooked rice. Drier rice makes dry fried rice, which is what you want. You don't want soggy fried rice -- it's not good.

A quick criticism of Chef Patel: she didn't use leftover rice first of all. In fact, she didn't wash her rice, she proceeded to cook it in too much water, and then she used a colander to strain her rice.

Listen. If you cook rice correctly, the water should absorb into the rice. There should not be excess water. The eggs also looked a little dry, but somehow, for what Chef Patel did, it didn't turn out terribly.

Now let's move onto celebrity chef Jamie Oliver. I wanted to cry when he was making his take on fried rice. He didn't use leftover rice either. He used instant rice. Packaged, microwavable rice. One of the biggest issues is that he used chili jam in his fried rice.

Please do not put chili jam or any type of jam for that matter in your fried rice.

I am begging you.

Chili jam does not belong in fried rice. There's something called Sriracha for a reason. Use that. Not chili jam.

So now that you've all heard me criticize other peoples' fried rice, you may be wondering, "How do you make your fried rice?"

Let me explain, my lovely readers.

First, I use leftover rice. This is very important. I like to crack my egg into the cold rice and mix it in before I start cooking. I find that this way, the egg coats more rice. If you put in the egg later, not every piece of rice gets a bit of egg.

I like to use sesame oil to cook the fried rice because it just works. The flavor of the sesame oil goes a long way. I cook the rice and egg mixture until the rice is separated. This is the point where you are free to add in anything you want. Carrots, peas, whatever you want. You can throw in some meat if you want. I personally like my egg fried rice really simple. I just add a little bit of soy sauce for some flavor, and put in some green onions too.

Fried rice is a simple dish, but its simplicity brings happiness and comfort to many, myself included. I will always stand by the fact that you should make your fried rice however you want to make it, even if using freshly cooked rice and straining it through a strainer is what makes you happy. If putting chili jam in your fried rice is your thing, then you are more than welcome to continue to use it.

Happiness is something that some of us may be struggling to find in this seemingly never-ending pandemic. With cases spiking again and the changing weather, you may be feeling extra down. While I can't immediately boost your happiness levels like in video games, I do hope my little article about fried rice makes you a little happier.



layout by zoe edelman

# We Need To Change Our Voting System

## *Why American elections should adopt rank choice voting*

Emerson Brown | Opinion Editor

**B**uttigieg first, Warren second, Biden third; what if the Democratic primaries in March looked like this? Instead, people did not back new, diverse, or lesser-known candidates and the system forced them to favor a safe bet, Biden. A possible solution to avoid this would have been the use of rank choice voting (RCV).

RCV, also known as instant runoff elections, is a system in which voters rank their top three candidates from best to worst. If no candidate gets over 50 percent of votes in the first round, the candidate with the least amount of first choice votes gets eliminated and their voters' second choice will be counted. This process of eliminating and redistributing votes repeats until a candidate reaches a majority.

As an example, pretend there are four candidates, Red, Orange, Yellow, and Green. Voter 1 votes Red, Yellow, Green, in that order. After everyone's first choice votes are counted (in our example, Voter 1's first choice is Red), Yellow has the most votes, then Orange, then Green, then Red, but no one has over 50 percent yet. Since Red has the least votes, voters whose first choice was Red will have their votes counted for their second choice. In our example, Voter 1's vote would now go to Yellow because that is their second choice. Election officials repeat this process until a candidate gets over 50 percent of the votes.

Currently Maine is the only state with state-wide RCV for the presidential election, though other jurisdictions use RCV for different types of elections. New York City, starting in 2021, will use RCV in primary and spe-

cial elections. This year, Massachusetts and Alaska will vote on whether they will implement it for future state elections. Many other states and counties use RCV for primaries or runoff elections.

Though RCV has more steps than a 'normal' election, the system promotes democracy and bipartisanship to benefit every citizen.

Primarily, RCV removes the idea of "throwing away your vote" because even if your first choice candidate does not win a majority, your second or third vote still counts. Due to this property, third party candidates have more of a chance in the election because voters can rank primary candidates as their second or third choice vote as a failsafe if a third party candidate does not garner enough support.

In primary elections, newer and lesser-known candidates have a disadvantage because they have not yet created a reputation or no experience in the position they are seeking. RCV allows voters to place their faith in someone new with the assurance that if not enough people trust this new person they will not be elected.

In elections without RCV, there is a fear of "splitting the vote" when two similar candidates are competing for the same group of people's vote. This benefits the opponent of the similar candidates because the like-minded people will be split into two groups that both dislike the same candidate.

To explain this further, let's imagine that this is a perfectly predictable election where the Blue Party will get 60 percent of the votes and the Orange Party

will get 40 percent of the votes. But, there are two Blue Party candidates, Cyan and Turquoise, who will receive 35 and 25 percent of the vote respectively. Even though the Blue Party has more supporters than the Orange Party (60 vs. 30), their votes were split and the minority supported party will take control (35 vs. 25 vs. 30).

In elections with RCV, "splitting the vote" is eliminated. For someone who chose Turquoise first and Cyan second, their vote will go to Cyan giving the Blue Party a majority and better representing the majority of the district.

RCV encourages real majority support and more accurately represents the district. Someone who gets the most votes in the first round of voting would be the winner in a 'normal' election, but if they do not have more than 50 percent of the votes, the candidate who got the least votes has their votes redistributed to other candidates. With this redistribution, sometimes the candidate that got the most votes the first time around is overtaken by another candidate who ultimately wins. This is how RCV encourages genuine party support; the candidate who wins has first choice, second choice, and third choice supporters, not just one tier.

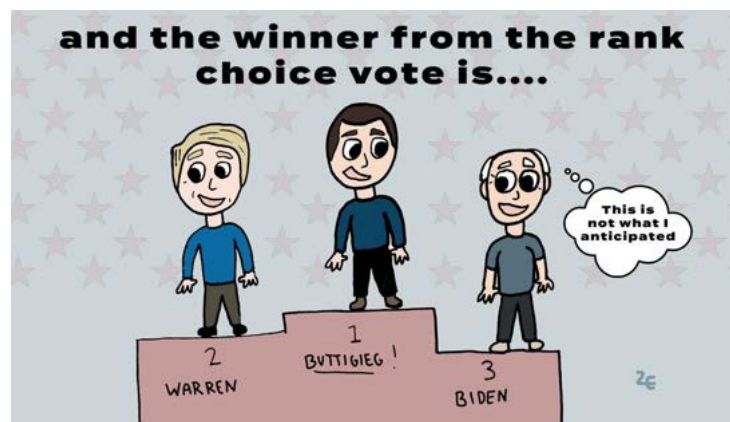
Because candidates are competing for support from everyone

this discourages negative campaigning. No longer do attack ads against the opposition candidate work; there is not a singular opposition candidate which makes creating these ads more difficult and those attack ads might be targeting voters' first choice candidate. If a voter's first choice is attacked by their second choice, the voter will cease supporting their second choice.

With more genuine majority support, RCV has the potential to address the legislative gridlock in our country. If candidates have to appeal to a wider sector of the population, they will be more willing to cooperate and compromise to make change.

Though RCV holds the possibility for beneficial effects, skeptics say it will not fix our crumbled political system. They may be right but RCV has not yet been implemented at a scale to support that claim. The safety in RCV though is it cannot make the system less fair or more broken than it already is.

This election there was a lack of poll workers, a pandemic, a Supreme Court changing election laws every day, gerrymandered districts, election lines 11 hours long, a postal system at the mercy of a broken electorate, and an incumbent who threatens to undermine a peaceful transfer of power so seriously, what is the harm in ranking your candidates one to three?



Blueprint Cartoon / Zoe Edelman



# Dear Patriarchy, Women Are More Than Their Bodies

*A letter to society, from your everyday feminist*

Catherine Lomond | Feature Editor

Inadvertent sexism can hide beneath the most ‘wholesome’ events, even rejoiceful family gatherings. Last year, my family threw a surprise birthday party for my aunt. It was a fun night with my whole family and aunt’s friends in attendance. Throughout the night, though, I noticed how the guests commented about my appearance, while the same people asked my brothers about their colleges, sports, and hobbies. My brothers’ exchanges were more substantial than mine regardless of my attempts to steer topics.

What I experienced that night is familiar to most women. Society has an altered focus; people will comment on a woman’s appearance and disregard qualities like intelligence or accomplishments.

This narrow focus on women’s bodies perpetuates the patriarchal cycle by pressuring women to change their looks for others, not for themselves.

Body shaming women to fit in unobtainable body standards not only discredits women for their job and achievements but also leads to the objectification of women.

A 1997 study by the University of Michigan devised the Sexual Objectification Theory, which states that sexual objectification occurs when a “woman’s body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire.”

Using this theory, later studies from the University of Tennessee’s Dawn M. Szymanski, Lauren B. Moffitt, and Erika R. Carr, backed by the American Psychological Association, linked sexual objectification of women to patriarchal institutions that enforce sexist gender roles, keeping women submissive to men in power.

Victoria’s Secret is a perfect example of a patriarchal institu-

tion. In recent years, society has become more body positive and many women are empowered and take joy in shopping at stores like Victoria’s Secret.

Despite this, the brand fundamentally stands upon the patriarchy’s pedestal. Roy Raymond started Victoria’s Secret in 1977 to help men feel more comfortable shopping for lingerie for their wives and girlfriends. He founded it streamlined towards male convenience rather than on feminine essential consideration. Society subscribed to the idea, though, and in 1982, Victoria Secret made four million dollars in annual sales and almost seven billion in 2019.

Due to the surge in popularity, Victoria’s Secret funded its own annual Victoria Secret Fashion Show in 1995, spending millions of dollars to showcase stick-thin models with unobtainable body standards.

Because of the stick-thin models, Victoria’s Secret only advertises one body. Victoria’s Secret refuses to include plus-sized and transgender models in its fashion shows because they do not “ex-

emplify the fantasy” of Victoria’s Secret, according to the Chief Marketing Officer Ed Razek. The blatant discrimination of transgender and plus-sized models enforces the stereotype that there is only one body type that is deemed beautiful and feminine.

This refusal to include more realistic and healthy body shapes and sizes led to the decline in the brand’s sales and gave rise to more inclusive brands like Rihanna’s Savage X Fenty, a lingerie brand with models of all sizes and genders.

Rihanna’s diverse brand is the antithesis of Victoria’s Secret; it includes women, men, and non-binary models of all different shapes and sizes. In a public statement regarding the brand’s diversity, Rihanna said, “when I imagine something, I imagine everyone that I know and love being a part of it... I want to make stuff that I can see on the people that I know and they come in all different shapes, sizes, races, religions.”

Rihanna emphasizes the idea of self-love and confidence and believes that lingerie and makeup is an empowering form of self-care. This idea denounces patriarchal cycles and the objectification of women because women are choosing to change for themselves and not others.

The patriarchy is an internalized idea ingrained in the minds of all of us. Women have so much to offer to the world, but we are often overlooked and underestimated. Current society still wields much criticism, whether it’s reflected in comments on the outfits we wear or the degradation of our interests. The more we focus on what we need, not only as women but as individuals, the more we can break away from the wide-ranged influence of patriarchal constructs.



# A Much-Needed Break From School

*As anxiety and depression rise in students, mental health days offer a solution*

Shrida Pandey | Online News Editor

As someone who struggles firsthand with an anxiety disorder, I understand the need to take a step back to breathe. Like so many of my peers, the stress of school, friends, and extracurriculars take a toll on my mental health.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the already rising rates of depression and anxiety in teenagers; as isolation and stress continue to harm students, we cannot continue shoving this problem into the shadows.

A major culprit of these rising cases is increased stress and competitiveness within the school system; a simple solution would allow students to take mental health days without the risk of truancy.

In January 2020, California state senator Anthony Portantino introduced a bill that would allow students to do this. Portantino, whose own brother committed suicide, stated that his goal for the bill was to reduce the stigma behind mental health.

Although the bill would allow students to use mental health as a reason for not attending school, it would not increase the number of days students are allowed to be truant, preventing students from taking advantage of the system.

The bill never passed.

The hypocrisy found within many schools' mental health support is blatant but never talked about; students are excused for physical health, be it a fever or broken bone, but not for absences from mental health.

To be fair, this could be reasoned with the fact that mental

health disorders are not as visible as physical health issues, but this transparency makes attention to mental health absences even more important. We need to show students that mental health days are just as necessary as sick days. Only this will allow us to continue breaking the stigma surrounding mental health.

Many students may feel inadequate or hide their suffering from mental health because people never talk about it. Society prioritizes visible success over invisible suffering at the expense of the achievers.

According to Teen Mental Health, one in five young people suffers from a mental health disorder. This means that 20 percent of our peers deal with this every single day. Moreover, with increasing isolation and stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health disorders have gotten worse.

Critics of mental health days argue that a mental health break does not accurately depict the "real world." However, high school is not meant to represent the "real world" -- it is meant to be a safe place for students to learn functioning skills properly. If mental health hinders the ability to learn, similarly to physical health, students should be allowed to take care of themselves at home.

In other states where legislation has passed, the measure has been successful in breaking the stigma and prioritizing students' mental health. California needs to follow other examples and implement mental health days into the school education system, or risk losing a generation to invisible illnesses.



Blueprint Cartoon / Zoe Edelman

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# Shamelessly Navigating Jewish Identity

## *Learning to welcome non-adamant followers of religion*

Ella Alpert | Arts Editor

According to my 23 and Me results, I am exactly 50.1 percent Ashkenazi. According to my micro-aggressors, “Am I *sure*?” because “I don’t *look* Jewish.”

Hailing from a religiously ambiguous family, I didn’t grow up going to synagogue; I didn’t eat kosher or learn Hebrew; I didn’t even have a bat-mitzvah.

Technically, “Jewishness” is passed through generations maternally. So religiously speaking, my predominantly Catholic mother is a huge cultural no-no. However, if you asked me what ethnicity I identify the most with, I would say, “Jewish.”

My father’s family is the pinnacle of Jewish pride. My grandmother attends temple regularly, eats kosher, and lives by the holy book. I revere his dedication and devotion to his religion and often wish I held the same perseverance.

Sure, I don’t play by all the rules. I love shellfish, tattoos, and pork, but can I not love those things and still hold an unwavering respect for the Jew’s inspiring biblical teachings?

Questions like this arose in my struggle to find peace within my ethnic and religious identity. I often wondered if I did enough to “qualify” as Jewish. A fellow Jewish classmate even told me that I didn’t “count” as a real Jew. Though I generally learned to brush ignorant comments off, their remark stuck with me.

I believed they made a valid point. My DNA said one thing, but my actions indicated another. I lacked a traditional commitment to my religion and felt suffocated by other people’s rigid ideas on what it meant to be Jewish.

For a period, I neglected to acknowledge my heritage as publicly as I once did, scared someone

would again invalidate my ancestry. I worried about other people’s recognition of me as a Jewish woman, and I lost sight of what the religion actually means to me.

Religion, and in my case, Judaism, symbolizes unity and togetherness through times of turbulence and oppression. The stories, while contrasting in their plots, simply boil down to wholesome life lessons followers are meant to adopt.

In my eyes, there is no incorrect way to worship an ideology of such radiance and positivity. Religion

should bring people together, and not separate them by ranks of who is the most traditionally “loyal.”

Over time, I reflected on these core values and realized that my unconventional practices do not need justification from others to be valid. In late October, a swastika painted in Downtown Lafayette only reinforced this self-reliance.

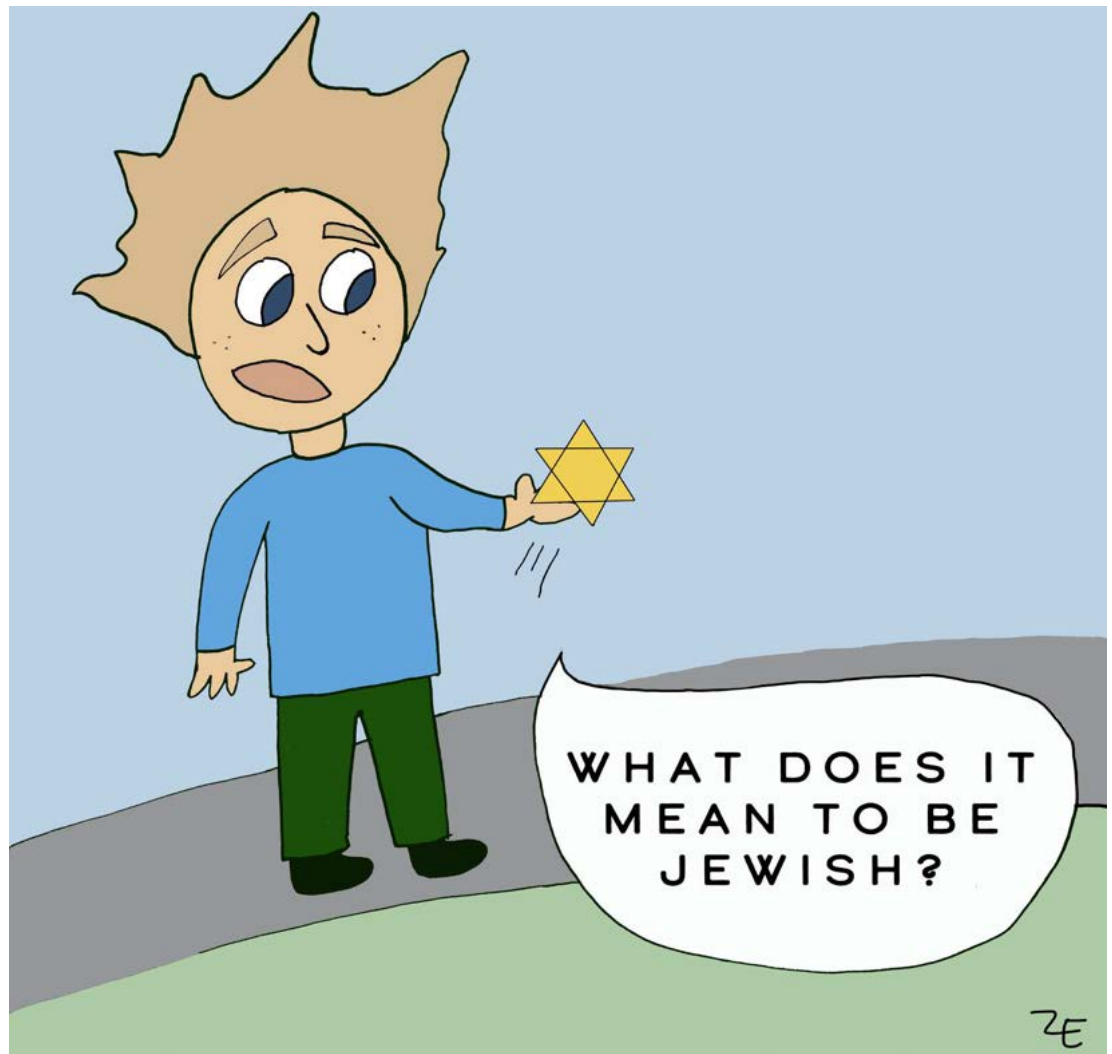
The horror that swept across the community following the vandalism’s discovery reminded me of the strong connection I feel toward my heritage. Despite my wavering faith, the symbol’s repulsive implications allowed me to feel connected, through repugnance, to other Jews I felt previously exiled by. Although we remain different in practice, we equally shared deep panic for the safety we once enjoyed in

our community.

If we can show up and support each other in our most vulnerable states, how does our dedication to orthodox dogma equate to our identity as Jewish people?

No two people are the same, and most interpret identity and religion individually. Some people believe there is a checklist that certifies an ‘official’ Jew, and other unconventional Jewish folks, like me, should not experience judgment for creating their own path.

Recent events illustrated that without acceptance, we as a community cannot become unified. Every Jew deserves to feel disgusted. Every Jew deserves to experience repulsion. Every Jew deserves to mourn the lost innocence of our community’s children together.



# The Flaws of High School Education

*As students move to Zoom, we must shift away from passive learning*

Keith Johnson | Head Videographer

Every day, students wake up and go to school to listen to various presentations about new formulas, historical events, or literary themes. Teachers drone on and on, genuinely trying to teach yet fail to snag students' attention. When was the last time students woke up excited for a day full of lectures?

Most schools and teachers utilize passive learning, a style of learning in which students receive information through presentations, lectures, or worksheets. However, another

type of learning known as active learning is more effective and interactive and is shown to increase student's retention of information.

While passive learning forces students to sit down and listen, active learning engrains information into students' minds through discussions, debates, labs, and hands-on activities that force them to think more critically. Active learning helps students understand larger topics and then narrow down to the details, rather than starting with the details and

expecting students to deduce bigger ideas, themes, and concepts like in passive learning.

For instance, students in an English class would learn about the themes prior to reading, and search for quotes and contextual evidence as they read.

A study from the National Academy of Sciences found that students who learned in interactive methods, such as hands-on labs and activities, retained more information than those taught the same information through passive methods, such as lectures.

In the study, two groups of students learned through either passive or active learning methods. At the end of the study, each group took a test to see how much information they

retained. The students taught with active learning scored an average of about 70 percent, while the students taught with passive learning scored an average of 65 percent.

Despite the advantages of active learning, passive learning continues to dominate most modern high schools and teachers perpetuate passive learning by mainly teaching through lectures and presentations.

Critics may argue passive learning is effective when a student is alone and studying by themselves, but in group settings, such as classrooms, active learning easily outperforms passive learning.

Discussion is especially important in history and English classes, where students must interpret various books, poems, and historical documents. Adding chances for students to debate in these classes would increase student participation and help them delve further into the material.

Even most science labs taught at Acalanes are hands-on, they still utilize passive learning. Many labs are just step-by-step directions that the students must follow. An active learning lab would ask students a question and then have them design their own lab to gather data and answer the initial question. This design forces students to take the learning into their own hands.

With active learning, students receive more responsibility for how they choose to participate. While this may seem risky with the chance that some students will tune out completely, giving students the chance to discuss and debate can lead to them caring more about the topics they are learning.

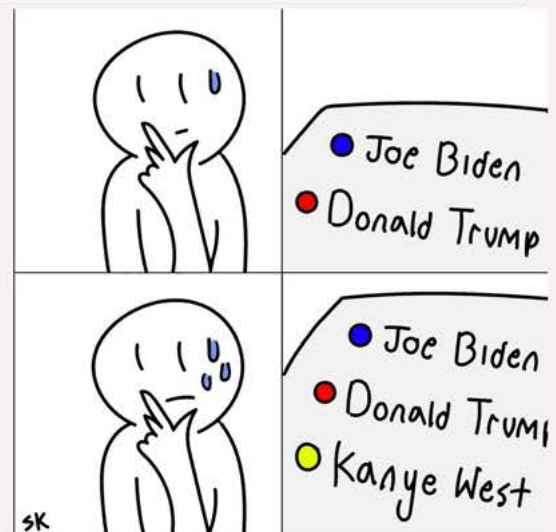
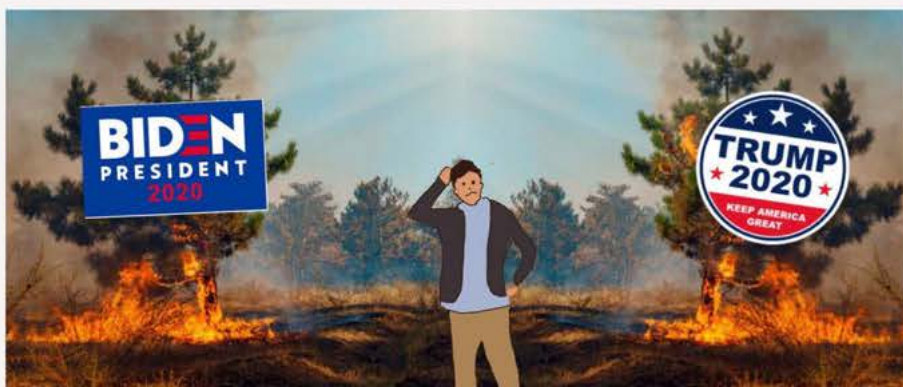
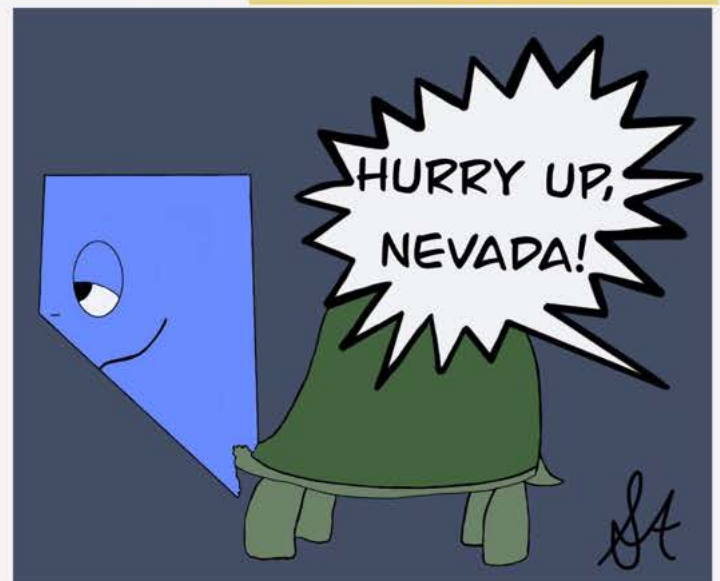
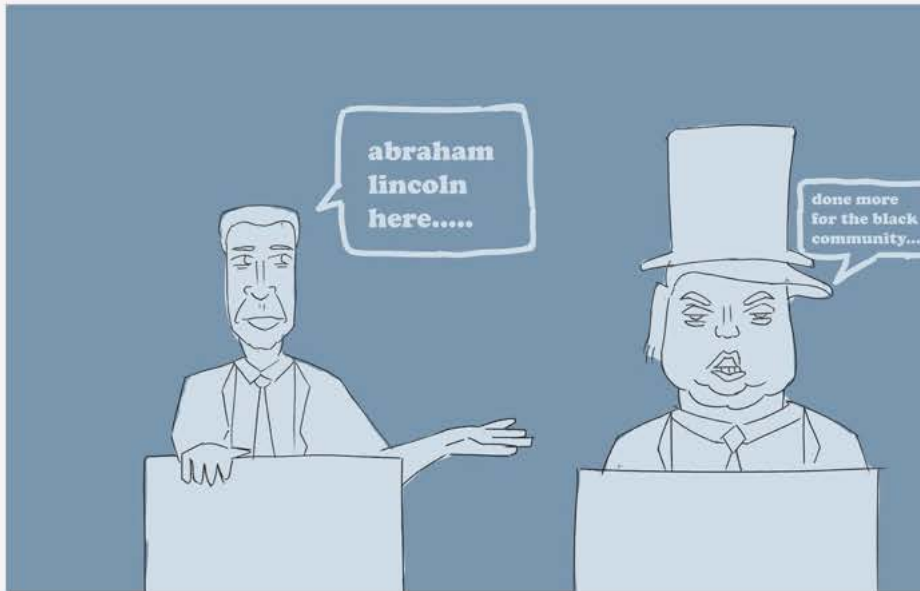
As the education system continues to change, administrators and teachers must take the time to discuss this topic and determine the future of standardized learning. If Acalanes wants to increase student motivation when it comes to learning, switching from passive to active learning is the place to start.





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# NOAH'S NOTION

## *Analyzing the effects of a potential disaster if high school sports return*

Noah Glosson | Head Section Editor

The disappearance of high school athletic events began with Acalanes Union High School District (AUHSD) and Athletic Director Randy Takahashi limiting in-person attendance. Soon after, the AUHSD and Takahashi had no choice but to bar fans from attending these events as more COVID-19 cases popped up in Contra Costa County. Ultimately, the school closed its doors in early March bringing athletics to halt as well.

Athletics resumed in the early summer and student-athletes continue to practice with regulations and restrictions.

While trends looked promising in California for the first eight weeks of quarantine, cases spiked when the summer came around putting the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) in a complicated predicament.

After months of deliberation, the ten section commissioners congregated in

# High School Sports Must Return with Caution

August and made a plan. They decided to postpone high school athletic events and practices to Dec. 7, possibly due to a massive spike in cases at the time of the verdict, as with nearly 12,000 new cases each day, the committee didn't want to risk the safety of students along with staff and spectators.

This was the right call. After early trends showed promising results over the summer, cases surged as more residents forwent social distancing measures. Scientists estimate that a vaccine will not become completely available until mid-2021 and some estimate the country will distance into 2022. As a result, some administrators question whether or not the return to athletics is premature.

Although the AUHSD held athletic camps over the summer with specific health parameters and guidelines, several students became exposed to the virus. While perilous practice without protocol increases the likelihood of COVID-19 exposure, reckless behavior outside of practice gets a lot of the blame. Teenagers have congregated in large groups or at parties without regard to the repercussions.

While I don't discourage relatively small meetings, parties and massive gatherings will only spike cases and halt the return of high school athletics. The vast majority of

students support schools reopening.

To ensure a resumption of sports this winter, the district needs to be strategic. Following guidelines provided by local health departments will reduce staff and student exposure to the virus. Every player and personnel must wear a mask and have proper sanitation at all times.

When it comes to gathering, coaches need to keep track of what their players do outside of practice. This will help with contact tracing and if a player becomes exposed to the virus practices can shut down immediately.

As for attendance, allow at the very most some family members and important personnel. This includes trainers, announcers like myself, administrators, coaches, and additional staff. Based on capacity, the school can likely allow anywhere from 50-75 spectators in the stands. This will allow some energy in the stands and revive a portion of an electric atmosphere that would otherwise be missing.

This is not an ideal scenario. Everyone wants 2,000 fans packing the stands on a Friday night, but unfortunately, there is an ongoing pandemic and we cannot expose ourselves to the virus and spread it to others. In the end, we may not be able to pack the stands, but we can still salvage the excitement.

Blueprint Cartoon / Zoe Edelman



layout by zoe edelman





# Fall Sports Expected to Commence in Early December

## *California high school athletics aiming to return with strict precautions*

Mason Archer and Miller Smith |  
Sports Editor and Staff Writer

After nearly eight months since the suspension of high school athletics on April 3, fall sports seasons are set to begin on Dec. 7.

The California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) is currently talking with the California Health Department about the launch of the 2020-2021 season as COVID numbers trend in the right direction, per The Los Angeles Times.

This season will consist of new guidelines regarding masks, social distancing, hand washing, sanitation, and more. Additionally, necessary safety measures will also be in place for any athlete that contracts COVID-19 or comes in direct contact with an athlete who has.

"If there is a kid that tests positive, then everybody who had close direct contact with that kid is out for 14 days, as well as that kid is out for at least 14 days. And at that point, it has to be determined by a doctor that they're cleared and not infectious anymore," Athletic Director Randy Takahashi said.

However, even in light of the increased precautions and guidelines in place to combat COVID-19, athletes are eager for sports to resume.

"I am very excited for the new season because I just love to compete and play sports in general. It's also a great way to see people I haven't seen for a long time as a result of distance learning," cross country runner and sophomore Bennett Dodge said.

With the first fall sports seasons expected to start on Dec. 7, sports camps that have been conducted since summer this year will come to an end. However, with the ending of said camps, concerns about the season continue to grow regarding new rules and safety measures that will be in

place.

"I think this season will be stressful because it is my first high school sports experience and along with new rules and regulations of COVID, I think it [could] cause a stressful but still fun season of sports," volleyball player and freshman Mika Bocobo said.

Despite safety measures being in place during sports camps and team workouts, coaches worked tirelessly throughout the summer and into the fall to prepare their athletes for the upcoming season.

"I believe our team and players will be better prepared this season, more than any I've coached in the past," junior varsity football head coach Greg Young said. "We've been working in our 'pods' since the beginning of June. We already have a full season of practicing in, before even starting this upcoming season. The team has been working with weights, getting in condition with agility drills, and core workouts."

Confusion remains prevalent within the Acalanes community as people await more information regarding the start of the season.

"I am looking forward to gaining more information about the return of sports and I am just still a little confused on whether or not I will be able to play my sophomore

season," football player and sophomore Tyler Murphy said.

Football is the first sport set to return with practice beginning on Dec. 7 and the first games slated for Jan. 8. However, the CIF and North Coast Section (NCS) still need to allow high school sports to resume again for that to happen.

"I wish there was a more clear update of the likelihood of each sport returning in December and if/what the limits will be regarding the start and play of sports," Dodge said.

Ultimately the decision of whether or not sports will begin in December comes down to the CIF and NCS ruling. However, the District and Acalanes Athletic Department still remain in the dark as the CIF and NCS continue to heavily restrict the information released to the public.

"[The CIF and NCS] are not saying anything because there's so much going on as far as counties, are they in purple, red, orange, yellow, what kind of restrictions are in place, what can we expect, what's going to happen when we get to December seventh. There's so much uncertainty, so what they're trying to do is not say too much because anything they say is going to become true," Takahashi said.



# DAL High School Rivalries: The Good, The Bad and the Difference

*School rivalries remain a staple of high school sports in the DAL, but at what cost?*

Tom Bequette and Anastasia Grits |  
Online Sports Editor and Staff Writer

High school rivalries, since their first official documentation in 1875, remain a valued heritage in American small-town communities, including Lafayette. Underneath the flashy contrasting colors, cheering crowds, and dancing mascots, however, the rivalry tradition has spurred much influence on local community bonds and relationships.

No matter where you live in the U.S. there is a good chance that a high school rivalry exists in your town; according to MaxPreps.com a whopping 110 high school rivalries older than 100 years exist in the U.S. One even exists locally between Campolindo, Miramonte, and Acalanes: the Diablo Athletic League (DAL). Yet whether or not the rivalries remain all in good fun is a different story.

In 2012, teenagers from Willoughby South High School in Eastern Ohio dealt \$1,000 worth of property damage to their rival, Eastlake North, including spray painting their football field. In 2015, a fight during a Hall vs. Conard high school basketball game led to four arrest warrants and three juvenile summons being issued. While a DAL rivalry has never been taken quite this far, hurtful chanting and arguing between players and fans is quite common.

DAL rivalries can create a great deal of animosity in our communities when students take friendly competition too far.

"Emotions can play a major role in rivalry games," varsity football player and senior Ryan Tresser said. "Sometimes a game can come down to who can best keep a level head when things get aggressive."

The Acalanes versus Campolindo rivalry doesn't just concern students either, as parents play a major role.

"I think some parents take rivalry games too far and they need to remember that it's the kids that are playing not the adults," women's lacrosse coach Steve Seiler said. "Rivalries are not that big of a deal and they shouldn't be for adults, they should be for kids."



Not to mention that these games can add unwanted stress onto already stress-overloaded Acalanes students.

"Rivalry games definitely increase my stress," varsity football player and senior Graham Oh said. "It can be a little harder to concentrate throughout the day until we can get out onto the field."

Despite negative effects, rivalry games can act as a major event that bring people in the Lamorinda community together.

"What makes the Campo game so amazing is that everyone shows up and supports us against our rivals that we grew up playing sports with," Oh said. "People just come together and it makes the experience a lot better than normal games."

Rivalry games at Acalanes also tend to boost school spirit as students unite behind their teams.

"The atmosphere around the game is different too," Tresser said. "There's almost double the fans at the game, and there is a massive amount of cheering and support the entire time."

Additionally, the competition can motivate athletes to work harder leading to a major improvement from them.

"There's a different mood around the locker room when we are preparing for Campo," Tresser said. "Everyone has a bigger drive to win and there's no messing around at practice."

While rivalries tend to produce more competitive and higher quality games, the downsides remain prevalent in high school athletics.

A key difference between friendly and harmful

*Blueprint Cartoon / Emma Uffelman*

rivalries is dependent on how well Lamorinda students and parents can separate their animosity for the opposing team from their emotions towards the players and fans of that team.

"We want to make sure that we are being respectful of all parties involved; whether that's a student-athlete, that's a coach, a referee or another fan, ultimately we're all there because we love that sport and we like watching that sport. We want to make sure that we're being safe and respectful to all other fans and participants," women's volleyball coach Haley Walsh said.

Furthermore, coaches can act as a major factor in determining how their players conduct themselves during rivalry games as they act as mentors to their athletes.

"It's extremely important to keep calm during games and to set a good example for your athletes," Seiler said. "Because in a lot of ways they mimic you in how they treat these types of situations."

The Acalanes, Campolindo, and Miramonte rivalry remains a controversial aspect of the Lamorinda sporting environment, however one thing is for sure: they aren't going anywhere anytime soon. It is vital that we keep them as friendly and harmless as possible so that in this current world of chaos sports can provide a temporary respite.

"Above all, the main thing that we have to remember is that rivalries are supposed to be fun," Walsh said. "Taking things any further than that is just foolish."



# Effect of Exercise on Student's Mental Health

## *Examining the correlation between physical activity and mental health*

Alexandra Ames, Juliet Becker, and Helen O'Neal | Staff Writers

For hours a day, many students sit stagnant, hunched over their laptops, scrolling through their social media feeds, laying in bed. Although some continue to go for walks and attend practice, the physical effects of inactivity can be obvious.

As the semester draws closer to finish and students remain quarantined, the accumulation of stress obtained from the hectic year strains mental health. Yet even the simple maintenance of staying physically active can help to counter draining cesspools of anxiety and isolation.

A recent study done by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health found that running for 15 minutes a day or walking for an hour can greatly reduce the risk of major depression by 26 percent. Likewise, exercise is the body's natural way of fighting anxiety and relieving tension or stress; additionally, it boosts physical and mental energy while increasing well-being through the release of endorphins.



Blueprint Photo / Emma Uffelman

Acalanes students and athletes reflect these effects of physical activity, as many feel that exercise provides relief from stress and anxiety.

"[Exercising] not only makes me feel good about myself but helps take the stress out of life that could be going on outside of the sport I'm practicing. Soccer has helped me when I am feeling down, it makes me forget about all my other problems and focus on what I love to do the most," sophomore Wynter Rivera said.

However, not all students agree, as they find that physical exercise has limited beneficiary extents.

"I honestly think that it depends on the mindset that I'm in when I am exercising. If [the person exercising] has an addictive personality it could lead to eating disorders or the need to always be fit," sophomore Jiselle Sicilia said. "Personally, for me, I don't think that [my] mental health benefits from exercising."

Some athletes also feel that sports do not always contribute to improving mental health and instead negatively affect it.

"[Sports] helped with [my mental health] but also didn't at the same time. It helped with my body image because I was working out. But the stress of it was very hard because I was doing a lot of things after and before school that took a lot of time," freshman Gabe Gardner said.

Limited physical activity not only affects students but adults as well.

"As a former athlete and now athletic trainer and coach, sports are very important to me. Exercise is an important way for me to clear and calm my mind. I have suffered from anxiety/panic attacks in the past. These episodes almost always coincided with a drop off in my physical activity," Physical Education Department Chair and Sports Medicine Instructor Chris Clark said.

The pause in sports created by the pandemic

has provided some student-athletes with time to focus on themselves and their mental health.

"[Not having sports] helped me recover my confidence because I was in the advanced class with mostly adults so I was used to always getting beaten down. [The break] helped me regain my confidence and helped me mentally because I had been stressed because I have this and that and fencing," Gardner said.

Acalanes psychology teacher, Nadar Jazayeri, believes that physical and mental health go hand in hand.

"We often try to separate mind and body, you have to take care of your mind and you have to take care of your body. But, the reality is those two are totally interconnected, so by taking care of your body, you are also going to be taking care of your mind. The brain works a lot better when it is not stressed or anxious. If you are exercising, you are a lot less likely to be stressed or anxious" Jazayeri said.

Jazayeri encourages students to stay active every day.

"Research shows that if you do even 21 minutes of exercise, they are guaranteed to have lower stress, lower anxiety, and lower depression," Jazayeri said.

Exercising is an important piece to helping strengthen the body and mind, but Clark is adamant about reminding students to focus on themselves first.

"Be kind to yourself. It's okay to make sure you're well. We can't give the best of ourselves to others if we haven't worked on giving it to ourselves first. Don't compare yourself to others as each of our journeys and life experiences are different. Just do the best that you can do and that's good enough. It doesn't matter how that compares to anyone else," Clark said.



# Freshmen Athletes Experience an Unusual Introduction to High School Sports

## *Class of 2024 athletes work to overcome abnormal obstacles*

Kyle Bielawski and Connor Faust | Staff Writers

Sporting events remain hallmarks of the Acalanes experience, especially to bright-eyed freshmen. Yet, in a continuously changing world since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak and closure of school in March, freshmen prepare for a unique season of high school sports.

The introduction of high school sport precautionary infection measures have shifted regulations players and coaches must abide by. New requirements, such as liability forms and teams having to split into groups containing a maximum of 12 people, athletes, namely freshmen, have yet to experience the team bonding that many find prevalent within high school sports programs.

Many coaches have focused on remedying this deficiency but have run into barriers as they adhere to the safety guidelines in place. Such barriers include the aforementioned 12 person group limit and the strict scheduling and filling out of forms that come along with these groups.

"It's a challenge because of the groups. Another challenge is getting the entire team to bond which will happen assuming we will all practice together," freshmen football head coach Bill Hansen said.

For many, practices provide a space to become better players and teammates. Players build team chemistry and their bonds with one another during practice, a key for not only team success but a positive team culture as well.

"The biggest negative of playing during COVID is not being able to practice as a full team. Since we are on varsity now, we are playing with the class of 2021 and we have to build a team bond with them which is very hard considering we don't see half of them," varsity football player and junior Logan Ketcham said.

In a normal season, freshmen spend time together and build a valuable team culture that carries into later years in the program, however many different safety precautions and restrictions are making it extremely difficult for teams

to connect and bond.

"So far [we can't bond] because of the fact that we only get to practice in small groups of 12 and not the whole team," freshmen football player Jake Boselli said.

Freshmen continue to see huge changes in how practices are conducted and regulated. With restrictions in place, many teams have seen a shakeup of who can attend practices, when can they practice, and how players can interact.



Blueprint Photo / Connor Faust

"It's a lot different, you have to put on a mask and it's very strict with no facing each other. It has not been like last [year] when you had a full team practice, but there have been instances where you could play with older athletes. So yeah, I'd say it's just not as a whole team. It's scattered with different varsity athletes coming into different clinics," varsity volleyball player and junior Tommy Bieker said.

This deviation from the norm is evident to the freshmen who have continued practicing despite the challenging circumstances.

"We had to be much more spread apart and at the beginning, everyone had to use their own ball so there was no passing or anything where we share a ball. It took us months to finally be able to practice inside and we all have to wear a mask," volleyball player and freshman Tea Smith said.

Acalanes coaches have since focused on creating an environment similar to last year. However, building that experience while keeping to the COVID-19 regulations has proved difficult, even for the experienced coaching staff.

"There are elements of normalcy to it even though we can't do full scrimmage or get into

each other with tough physical contact. That's a hugely satisfying part of the sport, that intense competition and the physical battles you have with an opponent, that we just haven't been able to replicate in any meaningful way," women's varsity water polo coach Michael Buchel said.

With those difficulties, comes the issue of how much the athletic experience has changed. For upperclassmen athletes, freshman year proved very important.

"My freshman year was so eye-opening and developed me as a person and as a player so much. I definitely think they're missing out on that relationship building and that team bonding. I know all throughout my three years I've grown even stronger bonds with some of the people and definitely met a lot of new people from volleyball," Bieker said.

Coaches, keeping this in mind, have committed to creating the best experience for their players. And despite the many safety restrictions, some have an optimistic view of what Acalanes sports and the freshman experience will look like going forward.

"The way I'm looking at it is that this is just pre-season. I mean, the season is potentially still going to happen during the school year, so I don't really need to simulate the season per-say. It's more like preparing students. I guess we don't feel the need to make up for a lost season because I'm still expecting the season to actually happen," men's varsity tennis head coach Drew Diefenbach said.





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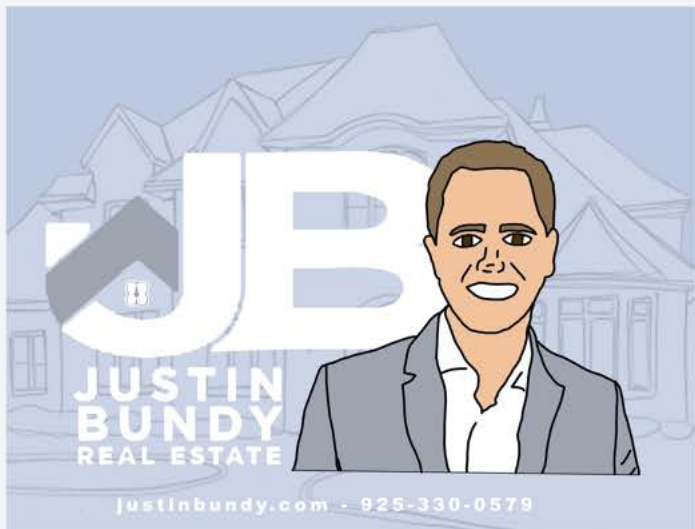
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